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Memoirs
of the
Countess Potocka

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COUNTESS POTOCKA,
Née Anna Tyszkiewicz; author of the "Memoirs."
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Memoirs
of the
Countess Potocka

Edited by Casimir Stryienski

Authorised Translation by
Lionel Strachey

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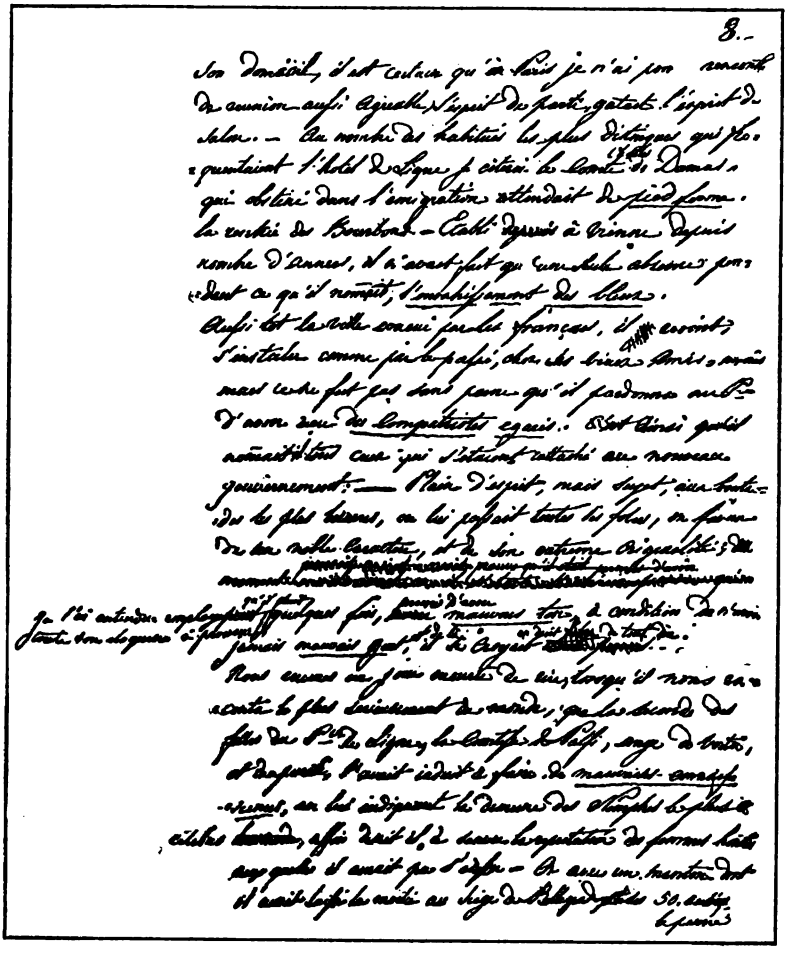

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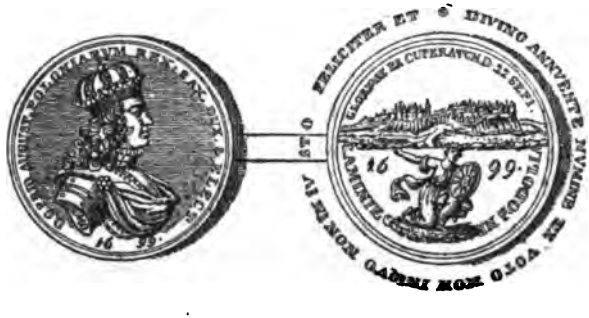


PREFACE

A WORD of help to those among the public for the first time plunged into this sensation of Polish surnames, this buzz of *yska's* and *owski's* and *wicz's*. Turn, groping reader, to the genealogical table at the end of this volume. Heading the brave lineage of our Countess Potocka you see the name of Stanislaus C. Poniatowski. From the loins of that great warrior, in the language of Voltaire "the indefatigable agent of the King of Sweden" (the pertinacious and ascetic Charles XII.), came five male and two female children, that is to say, five bearing the name Poniatowski and two with the *cognomen* Poniatowska. His oldest son, Casimir, was father to Constance, who was married to Count Louis Tyskiewicz, and this couple brought into the world the authoress of the present "Memoirs." Anna, the said writer, was to have been given in marriage to her uncle, Prince Stanislaus Poniatowski, but at the age of twenty-six she conferred her hand upon Count Potocki (pronounce: *Pototski*), so becoming Countess Potocka (pronounce: *Pototska*). They had three children, Augustus, Nathalia and Maurice, all born at Warsaw during the course of the countess' biographical narrative. This is composed of intermittent sections, indited, as journeys and court balls and Napoleon and *accouchements* might allow, between 1812 and 1820, but describes events as far back as 1794. Thus the "Memoirs" date from the Third Partition of Poland to the incorporation of what was left of that country with the Russian Empire,

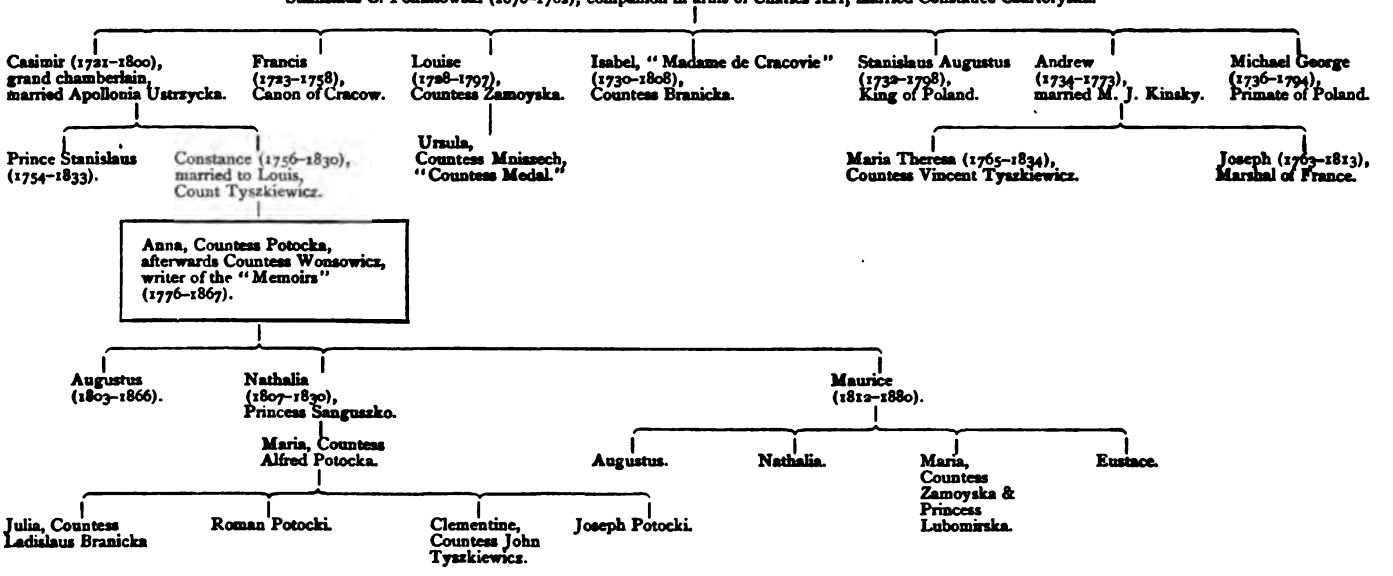
whose Tsar, Alexander I., impertinently invented himself "King of Poland" while astutely pleasing the fiery Polacks with a toy "Constitution."

Poniatowski—the companion-in-arms to the royal Swede of the stiff chin and ready sword—counted among his issue Stanislaus Augustus, the last king of Polish nationality. It is this granduncle of the authoress whose amiable incapacity to govern she truthfully avows in her opening chapter. In the same chapter a sister of this king, Isabel Poniatowska, afterwards Countess Branicka, is referred to as "Madame de Cracovie" by her candid and accomplished grandniece. Other aunts conspicuous in the Countess Potocka's complicated family history are Ursula, Countess Mniszech, nicknamed "Countess Medal," and Maria Theresa, wedded to Count Tyskiewicz (see chapters Three and Four of the Third Part). Both were granddaughters of the aforesaid Stanislaus C. Poniatowski. One of his grandsons, Prince Joseph Poniatowski, who took part in Napoleon's Russian campaign, as Marshal of France commanded the Polish legion at Leipsic, where he was drowned in the miserable little Elster.

The Countess Potocka, we see, was great granddaughter to Stanislaus C. and niece to Joseph Poniatowski. She was born as Anna Tyskiewicz, was married first to Count Alexander Potocki, to whom she bore three children and, upon his death, to Colonel Wonsowicz—briefly mentioned in her account of Napoleon's return to Warsaw from Moscow. At the age of ninety-one the countess died in Paris, where her brilliant *salon* held no insignificant place in the gilded pleasures of the Second Empire. Thirty years after the countess' death Casimir Stryienski, also a Pole, with the consent of her daughter Nathalia arranged the "Memoirs" for publication.

THE TRANSLATOR.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE.


Stanislaus C. Poniatowski (1678–1762), companion in arms of Charles XII, married Constance Czartoryska.
Casimir (1721–1800), grand chamberlain, married Apollonia Ustrzycka.
Francis (1723–1758), Canon of Cracow.
Louise (1728–1797), Countess Zamoyska.
Isabel, "Madame de Cracovie" (1730–1808), Countess Branicka.
Stanislaus Augustus (1732–1798), King of Poland.
Andrew (1734–1773), married M. J. Kinsky.
Michael George (1736–1794), Primate of Poland.
Prince Stanislaus (1754–1833).
Constance (1756–1830), married to Louis, Count Tyszkiewicz.
Ursula, Countess Mniszech, "Countess Medal."
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Eustace.
Julia, Countess Ladislaus Branicka
Roman Potocki.
Clementine, Countess John Tyszkiewicz.
Joseph Potocki.

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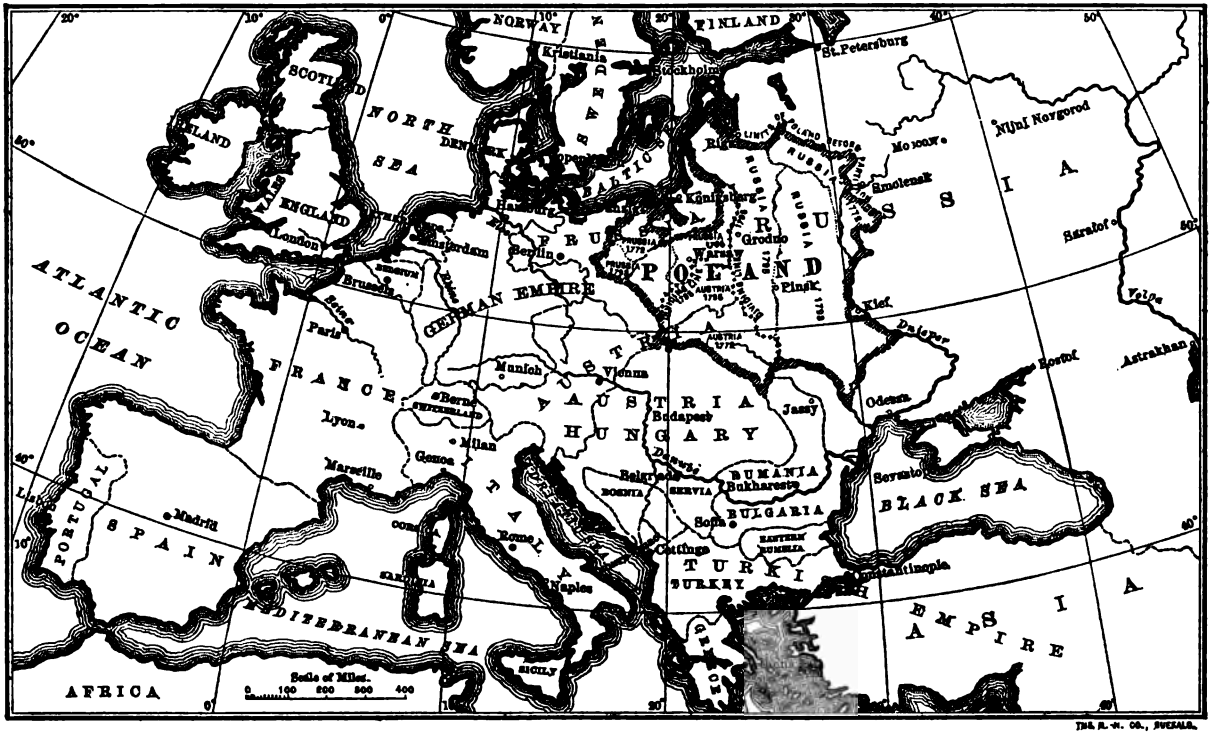


EUROPE, SHOWING ORIGINAL EXTENT OF POLAND AND ITS PARTITIONS.

Present Boundaries of Countries. ~~~ 1st and 2nd Partition Lines. ~~~ 3rd Partition Line of Poland. +++

CHAPTER I

THE CASTLE OF BIALYSTOK

1794

THE MARGRAVINE OF BAIREUTH—THE MARGRAVE OF BAIREUTH—THE LAST KING OF POLAND—BIALYSTOK—MADAME DE CRACOVIE—APRIL 18, 1794—THE LADIES IN KOSCIUSZKO'S CAMP—MASSACRE OF PRAGA, NOVEMBER 4, 1794.

IT was in the year 1812. I had lately been reading the Margravine of Baireuth's curious memoirs, whose publication, according to Napoleon, was the equivalent of a second battle of Jena to the house of Brandenburg, such pettiness and such turpitude did they disclose.

I was very young then, and a desire seized me to write down my memories and impressions as I advanced in age. At that time *memoirs* were not manufactured by the dozen. People wrote—with more or less honesty—*their own.* It seemed to me—this I can say without boasting—that I was able to bring more interesting facts together than those which built the good Margravine's fame, and so I set to work.

Not every one can be the sister of a great man. That sometimes disturbed me. I knew very well that it was

Frederick II. who was sought for under a heap of coarse anecdotes.

Although issued from royal blood, I had *never had my ears boxed*, to speak in Margravian terms; I had never found *hairs in my soup*, and I had never been *put under lock and key*. Instead of a wretchedly meagre principality, we inhabited one of the finest castles on the continent, a fact which is neither as novel nor as spicy as those which the Margravine tells us about her place of abode. But, living in the Grand Century, I founded my hopes on the interest attaching to those glorious days.

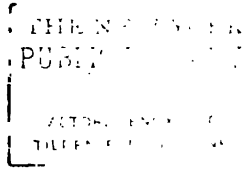
To write one's memoirs without mentioning one's self seems scarcely possible to me; if one wants to inspire confidence, ought one not to begin by introducing one's self?

My father was Count Louis Tyszkiewicz. My mother was a niece of the last of our kings, Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. This monarch's noble visage, his dignified manner, his gentle and melancholy gaze, his silvery hair, and his beautiful, slightly perfumed hand—all this is still present to my memory. The time to which these recollections belong is that of our last misfortunes.

My mother followed the king to Grodno, whither, upon the Third Partition, the Russian faction had compelled him to go. There, from a tiny chamber in which I had been lodged with my governess, I saw the royal train of slaves every morning. The Russian guards, with their flat, sallow faces, whom the knout turns into moving machines, frightened my juvenile fancy to such a degree that all my father's authority was needed to make me cross the threshold of the door, and never without resistance and tears, at that.

Dismal silence reigned in the castle where the family had gathered to say a last farewell to the unfortunate, whom, after having crowned, Catherine had burdened with chains. Carried off to St. Petersburg, he there expiated the errors

STANISLAUS AUGUSTUS PONIATOWSKI,
Last King of Poland.
From an engraving by Leney.



he had committed at the empréss' prompting, which she had exploited with a Machiavellian astuteness that has few parallels in history.

Under other circumstances Poniatowski might have occupied his throne worthily. His reign was epoch-making in the annals of science. He revived the taste for art and letters in Poland, which the rule of the Saxon electors, whose brutishness had brought a fateful reaction upon the country, had extinguished.

When Augustus drank Poland was drunk!

Stanislaus, on the other hand, took pleasure only in noble and useful occupations. His leisure hours were in large part devoted to men of science and to artists. In addition to a sound and varied education, he possessed a delightful mind and exquisite taste. Speaking the dead languages, as well as the languages of the countries in which he had travelled, with fluency, he had in him the capacity to a high degree of captivating his audience, and the art of addressing words to his hearers which would most flatter the national pride or personal vanity of each one of them. He had a large, generous heart; he forgave without reserve, and his beneficence often went a little too far. But nature, so prodigal to the man, had refused the monarch the only things which make a ruler: strength and will.

When the king had gone we returned to Bialystok—it was there that my aunt lived, Madame de Cracovie. She was the widow of Count Branicki, Governor of the Castle of Cracow, and sister to King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. Her husband had played an important part at the Confederation of Bar, and in 1764 he was entered on the list of claimants to the throne. But his brother-in-law's party showing itself the stronger, he retired to his estates, where he lived as king.

I saw the Castle of Bialystok when it was still fitted out

with rare splendour. French upholsterers, brought there at great expense, had purveyed furniture, mirrors and panellings worthy of the Palace of Versailles. Nothing could surpass the magnificent proportions of the saloons and vestibules, adorned with marble columns. The castle had seen the passage of all that Poland had to show in the way of great lords and the most eminent travellers. The Emperor Paul, when still grand duke, and his wife had stopped there a few days while undertaking the memorable journey that all Europe talked about. The arrangement of the gardens and parks, the wealth of the different hothouses, the beauty and profusion of the orange trees—all these things made this place a right royal abode. In the lifetime of M. de Cracovie, two theatrical troupes, French and Polish, as well as a company of dancers, maintained at his expense, shortened the long winter evenings by a variety of performances. The theatre, which was decorated by an Italian artist, could hold from three to four hundred people. This building, entirely separate from the castle, was situated at the entrance to the deer park. I saw it in fairly good condition.

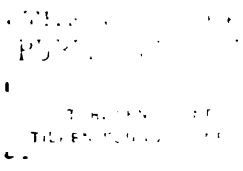
Such was then the mode of life that the great lords of the *opposition* led at home. In my day nothing was left but the reminiscences which I made centenarian servants tell me.

Count Branicki's widow, simple and quiet in her tastes, though noble and great in her actions, spent as large sums in charity as her husband squandered on festivities and amusements of all kinds. Sustaining with dignity the rank assigned her by birth and fortune, she secretly diverted from superfluity the liberal relief which she never refused indigence or misfortune.

No one on this earth has ever given better hope of the *possibility* of perfection, so universally disputed. Pious without bigotry, good without weakness, proud and gentle,

KOSCIUSZKO.

After a print engraved in 1829 by A Oleszczynski.



decided but sensitive, charitable without ostentation, disinterestedly generous, she possessed all of those qualities that constitute a love of virtue. Perhaps she would not have been thought clever enough by some, but no one could have written more gracefully, expressed herself with more distinction, done the honours of the house more grandly, and bestowed more active kindness on all her surroundings.

My children, when you shall pass through Bialystok I ask a thought of her and a recollection of myself. There my marriage was decided upon, and there I saw death for the first time! My mother hardly ever left that beloved aunt and I was brought up under her eyes. We spent the winters at Warsaw, and in the summer we returned to the beautiful residence I have been describing; but dating from the day when the king was dragged to St. Petersburg, his sister established herself in the country and never left her castle again. So the winter of 1794 was the last we spent in town.

I perfectly remember the revolution which put an end to our political existence. By common accord the command was conferred upon Kosciuszko, who ardently defended the holiest of causes.

On April eighteenth we were awakened by cannon shots and a sharp fusillade. My father being absent, and the servants having at once rushed to arms without troubling about our safety, a female council had to be called, who decided that the safest course to pursue was to hide in the cellars. We passed the morning there without any news of what was happening. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, the fusillading having ceased in our region, the king sent us word to try to reach the castle, where he resided. We found neither coachmen nor lackeys, and anyhow a carriage would have moved with difficulty through streets encumbered with corpses. We were obliged to walk across the whole suburb of Cracow, where the fighting had been going on for several

hours. The sight of this battlefield, where the Russians lay strewn about by the hundred, froze me with horror! But that was the only painful impression I felt: the spent balls that whistled above our heads did not disturb me in the least.

From that day until the massacre of Praga we never left the castle, the town being in a perpetual ferment. All that occurred in this interval has completely faded from my memory. I only recollect vaguely having accompanied my mother to Kosciuszko's camp, where five ladies, their little caps on their ears, were drawing wheelbarrows full of earth to be used for the erection of the ramparts. I envied their lot, and my childish heart already throbbed at the tales of our victories.

Morning and evening a nurse made me pray piously to God to bless our arms. I entered with all my heart into what she told me to do, only I did not exactly understand what was happening, and why one was supposed to be so cross with those handsome Russian officers, whom I had more than once watched with pleasure caracoling on beautiful horses. The massacre of Praga taught me, and very early my heart was opened to sentiments which I have transmitted to my children. Nine thousand defenceless people were slaughtered in one night, with no other refuge nor tomb but their own dwellings reduced to ashes! The king's castle being situated on the banks of the Vistula, which was all that separated us from the suburb of Praga, we distinctly heard the groans of the victims and the hurrahs of the butchers. It was even possible to distinguish the shrieks and the laments of the women and children, and the howls and imprecations of the fathers and husbands who were dying in defence of the dearest that man has. Profound darkness added to the horror of the scene. Against whirlwinds of fire exhaling a whitish smoke stood out infernal silhouettes of Cossacks, who, like devilish phantoms, tore

THE MASSACRE OF PRAGA.

From a German engraving.

hither and thither on horseback, their lances poised, with awful hisses urging themselves on in their murderous work.

Several hours passed in this way, after which nothing was to be heard but the noise of posts and beams falling in. No more screams nor wailing; no more clash of arms nor stamp of horses. The silence of death reigned over the suburb of Cracow—and the name of Souwaroff was dedicated to execration!

CHAPTER II

THE "EMIGRANTS" AND LOUIS XVIII

1798

THE BASSOMPIERRES AT BIALYSTOK—THE COUNT—A SOCIETY POET—MADEMOISELLE DE RIGNY—GLORIOUS MEMORIES—ARRIVAL OF LOUIS XVIII.—THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE BASSOMPIERRES—MARRIAGE PLANS FOR THE DUKE DE BERRY AND ANNA TYSZKIEWICZ—A FEMALE ADMIRER OF BONAPARTE—COUNT TYSZKIEWICZ—HIS NOBLE AND PATRIOTIC CONDUCT—CATHERINE'S ANGER.

Our revolution had followed closely upon the revolution in France; but, surrounded by three powerful enemies, it was our misfortune to succumb, and the most generous efforts, the most praiseworthy devotion, ended only in the total dismemberment of our country. It was not so with France, now marching with a firm step on to fame. A single point of comparison holds good: each country had its immigration. In France, the nobles, the royalists, the clergy. With us, the patriots, the victims, the exiles. France had her Vendée, and we our Legions! Less fortunate in every way, we were condemned to go to shed our blood in another hemisphere.

At the end of the last century Poland was overrun with

French "emigrants," who mostly claimed to be of grand descent, and eagerly accepted the hospitality offered them, as if they were conferring a favour. Madame de Cracovie had the whole Bassompierre family. First one had come, then two, then three, and finally the whole line, maternal and sempiternal.

There seemed no intention of making a fuss over the head of the family; however, as soon as the occasion arose he was besieged with the title of *marquis*. Next came the *count*, about fifty years old, husband to a young and rather pretty woman, whom he had married at this time of general topsy-turviness. Under any other circumstances Mademoiselle de Rigny (according to her intimates) could never have aspired to such a brilliant position! The count, short, puny, with well powdered porcupine hair, and the conventional pigtail as a butt for jokes, was not a highly agreeable personage. He had a large pointed nose, a sombre eye, and a pursed up mouth. He was supposed to be a wit. He quoted dates with felicity, and made little verses, passably well turned. Whenever a play was to be improvised, a celebration to be held, a surprise to be managed, we would ask him for some couplets. He always had to be besought, and always ended by giving us "his children," cautioning us not to *murder* them. Then came the rehearsals; it was an important affair! We had to lift certain *happy phrases*, glide along a rhyme, lean on a hemistich! Rarely did the author appear satisfied; he was mortally tiresome.

The countess' mother preserved remains of beauty, and seemed very wide awake. It was by no means proved that she had not, by former *sacrifices*, paved the way for the *splendid position of her daughter*. A nephew of twenty-three, who might have worn a workman's blouse, and a delightful little girl named Amelia completed the family. At first they would only accept modest accommodation, and

came in to share our meals. Later on they found the apartment too restricted, and discovered that it was not sufficient to dine—there are so many other *imperative* wants. They therefore *resigned* themselves to the *very secret* acceptance of a fairly large allowance. After a few months they expressed a desire to own a *regular home:* it is so charming to be at home! At once a pretty little villa was given them, a quarter of a mile from the castle.

A new establishment requires so much attention! The count, *absorbed* by political interests, could or would not busy himself in the matter—the countess was so young! She did not know how to go about it; and, moreover, strangers always run the risk of being cheated! The mamma thus undertook to let Madame de Cracovie guess at the embarrassment into which affluence had thrown them. Directly orders went forth, and the cottage was put into condition to receive its new guests. Nothing was wanting: the rooms were refurnished with elegant simplicity, the sideboards stocked, the pigeon-house was peopled, the garden raked, the footpaths sanded; even the coach-house and the stable were thought of, seeing that the family needed means of transportation to get to the castle. The uncle was too old, and Amelia too young, not to be fatigued by such a long walk.

So many benefactions heaped upon a foreign family excited envy; and if ever such a sentiment can be called excusable this was, given the manner in which said kindnesses were received. It was everlasting comparisons between the past and the present, uncivil allusions, or indelicate regrets. If some new arrival complimented our "emigrants" on the arrangements of their little villa, which really was charming, he was answered by a deep sigh, by a look of resignation, by some irrelevant phrase which meant, *It might do for others, but for us——!* And then they

CRACOW,
The Capital of the Polish Republic.
From an engraving by Outhwaite of a drawing by Glowacki.

PALACE OF THE KINGS OF POLAND.
From an etching.

THE NEW YORK
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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

talked about the mansion they had been compelled to leave, of the delightful and gorgeous existence they had led there! From there to Madame Bassompierre, and the friendship that had bound the great king and that great man, was but a step; and once on this ground there was no more enduring the thing! The sighs became sobs, and the allusions became insults.

An annoying episode for the Bassompierres was the visit of Louis XVIII., who stopped at Bialystok on the way to Mittau, where the Emperor Paul had persuaded him to settle. He was travelling under the name of Count de Lille. The apartment reserved for sovereigns had been prepared for him. We installed him there with all the consideration due to his birth and to misfortune. Madame de Cracovie went as far as the waiting room to meet him. He appeared very sensible to this reception, and made great efforts in amiability. I was not yet of an age to judge him, but he pleased me, for he looked all round and rosy. His attendance was slim. Dethroned kings have few courtiers. Louis XVIII. had something better than flatterers: he had a sincere and devoted friend, Count d'Avaray.

We were highly curious to see what greeting he would proffer the illustrious exiled family. Alas! It was one of those disappointments from which it is hard to recover! *The king did not know them!* He knew the marquis no more than the count, the young countess no more than the old mamma! He even made rather light of these props of the throne whom he had never seen, and who had done nothing to hold up tottering royalty. M. d'Avaray, surprised at the airs of our Bassompierres, thought himself compelled to tell us what he knew about them. They were, to say truth, Bassompierres, but poor and degenerate, having inherited nothing but pride of their family traditions, among which those mansions took a place of which they so

incessantly talked. The Revolution had enriched them. They had never owned an establishment as pleasant as that offered them by a generous hospitality.

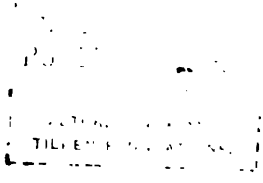
These explanations in nowise changed Madame de Cracovie's conduct; she continued to her death to overload her guests with kindness. However, the young countess learnt a lesson; she talked less of Paris, which she had *never seen*, and abstained from unflattering comparisons between the country she had been obliged to leave and that in which she had met with so fine a reception. Thenceforth she wore her linen without venturing to complain of the *odour of Polish soap;* and, as the king had pronounced upon the good fare, a subject on which he was very impressionable, she afterward believed herself free not to cut grimaces when eating her soup.

Whether it was the outcome of a passing project, or merely to make himself agreeable, and in this way pay for the royal reception given his master, I know not, but before leaving Bialystok Count d'Avaray proposed to my mother to marry me to the Duke de Berry. Hardly knowing what to reply, my mother urged my extreme youth, engaging, however, to transmit the proposition to my father, who would not hear of it. He answered my mother that a prince errant always looked to him more or less of an adventurer; that there was no probability of the Bourbons ever returning to France; that, moreover, a match that today might perhaps appear desirable to them owing to advantages of fortune, might later seem impolitic and unequal; that in any case, having but one daughter, he wished to marry her to a Polish nobleman.

This refusal, modified and codified, was conveyed to M. d'Avaray, who was even more astonished than shocked at it. I only learnt of this singular proposition long afterward, and I have often thought, in the course of the remark-

LOUIS XVIII.

From an engraving by Holl of Isabey's portrait.



able events unfolding before my eyes, what a strange situation I should have found myself in. Already Bonaparte was making Europe resound with the echo of his triumphs. Such glory and fame burnt on the conqueror's brow, such good fortune crowned his enterprises, that I seemed to see Alexander or Cæsar appear. I was brought up in the midst of the great man's detractors, but my admiration, often suppressed from fear of giving displeasure, grew none the less lively. How could I have reconciled sentiments of such a character with a lot similar to that which had been offered me? How could I jump for joy at the news of Napoleon's victories, being the wife of a Bourbon?

Writing chiefly for my children, it is my duty to make them acquainted with their ancestor's fine character—my father's. After the First Partition he joined the ranks of the few who refused to sign the iniquitous document dictated to the abject Targowica Confederation by Russia. Consequent upon this brave opposition, his whole fortune was sequestered; my father submitted silently to the rigorous treatment which his steadfastness and patriotism had brought upon him.

A few years later the Grand Duchy of Lithuania sent a delegation to St. Petersburg, in order to have the preservation of the old penal code, the *Litewski Statute*, granted by Catherine. The deputation, composed of the richest and most distinguished noblemen of the country, Catherine received with the demonstrations she so cleverly lavished on those whom she wished to enlist among her admirers. Her court was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant in Europe. Balls and festivities followed one upon the other. The Polish deputies found themselves invited *once for all* to these splendid receptions by the gracious sovereign, and thought themselves obliged to respond to such an invitation. My father alone confined his visits to the court to

the occasions demanded by the business which his mission included. The empress, surprised and offended at this lack of assiduity, was unable to withhold the mention of her displeasure from him, and, addressing him with asperity, said that he alone evinced no curiosity to see the beauties that adorned her parties. Far from appearing confused, my father made a low obeisance, as if he had taken this rebuke for a mark of favour, and replied in loud and firm tones that, considering the situation his country was in, a Pole could hardly dissemble his painful reflections, and, according to his opinion, sparkling festivities ought never to be darkened by any one bringing in irrepressible sadness. The sly Catherine, at once forming her opinion of the man who had ventured to answer her thus, exclaimed that she admired nothing so much as independent and elevated sentiments. She added:

"As a woman, I feel misfortunes which the severity of politics prevents me from forestalling as a sovereign."

Just as she was withdrawing, she took a little watch, set with emeralds, from her belt and gave it to my father, begging him to accept the gift as a special token of the esteem she bore him. This graceful act was followed by the cancelling of the sequestration imposed on my father's property.

CHAPTER III

THE ASTROLOGER

1802

MADEMOISELLE DUCHÊNE, MADAME DE CRACOVIE'S COMPANION—LIFE AT THE CASTLE—CHÂTEAUBRIAND AND ROUSSEAU—CHARLES XII.—THE SWEDISH ASTROLOGER—HE PREDICTS STANISLAUS AUGUSTUS A THRONE—THE GOOD OLD TIMES.

Our house contained a person highly remarkable by reason of her wit, education, and prodigious memory. I allude to Mademoiselle Duchêne, Madame de Cracovie's companion. A Parisian by birth, she had originally been employed by Madame de Tessé, and there had not only acquired the tone and manners of good society, but had collected a quantity of diverting anecdotes. She was one of those privileged people who never forget anything, no more what they have read than what they have heard. She had been nicknamed the "Perambulating Encyclopædia." As she had made friends with my governess, I saw a great deal of her, and in a great measure I owe to her the little I know. Madame de Bassompierre, whose education had been terribly neglected, was even more indebted to her than I. Mademoiselle Duchêne devoted herself, heart and soul, to the Bassompierre family,

whose habits, language, and very faults put her back into her motherland, so to speak.

Brought up amidst these French people, I instinctively caught the spirit of their language, and of my own choice pursued their literature. I was immensely fond of their partly witty and futile, partly instructive and serious, but ever lively conversation, even in the gravest discussions to which politics might give rise. For they were French people of the old school, who, in fact, made merry over everything, and took the lightest view of life they could.

The life we led was most independent. We saw little of each other except during the mornings. As to our occupation, we all suited ourselves. Some worked, others played. Madame de Cracovie was so tolerant that no one, not even a relative, was obliged to attend mass, which was said every morning in the chapel.

About three o'clock the dinner bell sounded. That was the signal for our general meeting. Every evening, excepting in midsummer, there was a reading in the drawing-room from seven to nine. Anybody might come, on condition, however, of observing silence. The companion's duties did not extend beyond this brief space of time, which the lady of the manor had set apart to inform herself as to the current periodicals and literary novelties. Failing these, the classics were re-read. It was in this way that I met with M. de Châteaubriand, who combined the classical traditions and modern thought.

The "Génie du Christianisme" had just been published. There are, alas! two things which cannot by any possibility be reconciled: morality and imagination. I warn mothers, who would like their girls to read this religious poetry, of the fact. The author has inserted a passage from "La Nouvelle Héloïse," one in which Julie complains of the void the heart experiences after the most deceptive emotions of

life are exhausted. I have not forgotten the effect Rousseau's harmonious prose had upon me. I stole the book to look up that passage again, and it put me into a melancholy, dreamy mood. M. de Châteaubriand, I do not doubt, had the best of intentions; he aimed to build to the greater glory of God; but, I repeat, the passage is dangerous to girls of fifteen; it produces a very different effect from that intended by the author.

The reading done, the doors were opened to all comers. The conversation was general. The old told stories, and the young listened attentively. Madame de Cracovie, oldest daughter to Poniatowski, the friend and associate of Charles XII., had picked up some interesting anecdotes from her father relative to the Swedish hero.

Never seemed there a man more fitly endowed with the qualities proper for great enterprises. Combining a body of iron with a soul of fire, nothing could astonish, nothing stop him. He did not believe in physical obstacles, and regarded human exigencies and weaknesses as childish chimeras and excuses for cowardice. One day there was no more food. The king, who always rode at the head of his army, suddenly jumped to the ground, and tearing up a tuft of grass, began to chew it. After a moment of silence he said to his faithful comrade, who looked at him in surprise:

"I was attempting the conquest of the world. If I had succeeded in feeding my troops after this fashion I feel that, although I might not have surpassed, I should at least have equalled Alexander and Cæsar."

He feared only one power in the world, the power of beauty; only a handsome woman could boast of making him quail—she put him to flight. He said:

"So many heroes have succumbed to the attractions of a beautiful face! Did not Alexander, my pet, burn a town

to please a ridiculous courtesan? I want my life to be free from such weakness; history must not find such a stain upon it."

He was told, one day, that a young girl had come to sue for justice on behalf of a blind, octogenarian father, maltreated by soldiers.

The first inclination of the king, a strict disciplinarian, was to rush straight to the plaintiff, to hear the details of the misdemeanour for himself. But, suddenly stopping, he asked:

"Is she good-looking?"

And being assured that she was both very young and unusually lovely, he sent word that she must wear a veil, otherwise he would not listen to her.

How I regret not having thought at the time of writing down all I heard! Now, it is only isolated facts that present themselves to my memory; then, it was the story of a whole life, the faithful account of the strangest events, of facts little known, which a person of advanced years and rare accuracy transmitted, still throbbing, to an attentive audience. She who, so to speak, put us in touch with those distant days, had the tales from an eye-witness, and recounted them with such a simple good faith, a precision as to dates, which showed that she would never have taken the liberty to alter a fact, to omit or add an incident—so dear was the truth to her, such an influence had her fine integrity even upon her most trifling actions and upon her mere recreations in life.

In the time of Charles XII. there were still professional astrologers. A superstition of this class attaches to an anecdote of my mother's youth. Sitting at my mother's feet, I pressed against her knees with a slight shiver, a commotion of the heart difficult to suppress. Whether that was childishness or credulity matters little. To-day I do not

blush at it, and avow my complete pleasure in being frightened. Here is the story of my well-beloved great-aunt's astrologer; perhaps it may meet with an impressionable reader, who will not be indifferent, inasmuch as, I repeat, there is no fiction in it.

At the death of Charles XII., Poniatowski, who had been tenderly devoted to him, returned to Poland. A little later he married Princess Constance Czartoryska, and established himself with her at his country residence of Wolczyn. Raised to the highest dignity of the land, the post of Governor of the Castle of Cracow, which his son-in-law inherited after him, he lived, honoured by his neighbours and cherished by his family, resting after a stormy career and the exalted tasks to which his best years had been consecrated. He was already the father of four children; at the moment when the singular occurrence happened which I am about to relate, the fifth was being expected. The excitement which an event of this kind evokes was then reigning in the castle, whence the children had been purposely sent out, and they were gaily snowballing each other in the courtyard, while their father, all anxiety, was mechanically following the clouds of smoke which his Oriental *chibouque* emitted.

A sudden tumult startled him from this preoccupied state. It was the children all running up at once; they were bringing a stranger who desired to speak to the master of the house.

An extreme benevolence and delicate politeness were the distinctive qualities of M. de Cracovie, qualities which he passed on to all his children. At the sight of the stranger his anxiety gave room to a lively curiosity. The peculiar dress and distinguished demeanour of this man were well calculated to summon attention.

M. de Cracovie having had him ushered into the saloon,

refreshments were officiously offered. As soon as the servants had retired the stranger told quite simply how, being a Swede by birth and an astrologer by profession, he was travelling in the interest of science; he wanted to interview a famous rabbi who lived at Kozieniec, a little town not far from Wolczyn.

Although familiar with cabalistic ideas, thanks to his former connection with Swedes, Poniatowski was impervious to practices of that nature. He could not conceal a slight smile.

"Ah! I see you doubt the finest, the sublimest of the privileges usurped by man, that of reading in the stars!" exclaimed the astrologer. "Very well! To conquer your unbelief and leave you a token of my visit and of my thanks for the kind reception I found under your roof, I will cast the horoscope of your children." Immediately all the brown and blond heads came forward, all the little hands were stretched out, and the seer, having asked the minutest details of the day and hour of birth of each child, predicted the most splendid establishments for the girls and military renown, honour, and riches for the boys.

At this moment the silence was disturbed by the cries of the new-born infant, which the midwife came to present to its father. Everybody surrounded it.

The astrologer, after throwing a rapid glance at the child, seemed to be taken in another trance.

"I salute you King of Poland!" he exclaimed aloud, "I salute you king from this very day, while you are yet ignorant of the rank to which you are predestined and the misfortunes to follow thereon!"

However proof M. de Cracovie was against all manner of superstitions, his daughter assured us that he had more than once confessed, long before the prophecy was fulfilled, to having been seized by a mortal chill at the astrologer's last words.

STANISLAUS C. PONIATOWSKI,
Commander of the forces of Charles XII. of Sweden.
From an engraving by Hopwood of a drawing by Peszka.

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King Stanislaus Augustus, the object of the prophecy, never referred to it, but all his contemporaries remembered it and told it, each after his own fashion.

How enviable is the superiority of character which allows us, without fear of ridicule, to admit freely that there are things one cannot explain, especially as it is impossible to deny them!

Oh, for the good old days, when people believed in everything!

First, they believed in Providence, and that simplifies many things; then they believed in Paradise, which makes many sorrows endurable. They believed in virtue and in resistance to evil propensities, for the cleverest authors, the most entertaining romancers, had then not yet established that such resistance is at least superfluous, passion justifying any lapse.

Faith was placed in miracles, disinterested love was believed in, devotion in friendship, and even gratitude.

After the serious beliefs came the amiable and superfluous beliefs—those that people reproached themselves for, and that must inexorably be confessed.

They believed in philters, spells, presentiments, fortune-tellers, astrologers, ghosts! Those beliefs produced poets, visionaries, religious fanatics, heroes, and madmen!

Now, the strongly equipped brains, the profound and positive minds, with which the age superabounds, refuse to believe in anything, or believe in nothing beyond bulls and bears!

God knows, however, whether bulls and bears rest on a surer foundation, and whether one is not often fooled by them!

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE TO COUNT ALEXANDER POTOCKI

1802

MARRIAGE SCHEMES — ARRIVAL OF COUNT POTOCKI AT BIALYSTOK—COUNT STANISLAUS POTOCKI—COUNT TYSZKIEWICZ AND GENERAL BENINGSEN—DEATH OF PAUL I. —THE AUTHOR'S EDUCATION AND TASTES—COUNTESS TYSZKIEWICZ—MADAME SOBOLEWSKA.

I WAS an only daughter; legacies from two large fortunes were coming to me. I had an old name, a pleasant face, and a thorough education. I was, in a word, what is conventionally called a good match. At the age of fourteen I was to have married Prince Stanislaus Poniatowski, my mother's brother; but as he was approaching fifty, was lanky, dry, and sober, I would not hear of him, and I withstood the inducements of jewels and a marriage outfit.

My mind and my heart were, I cannot say exactly how, swelled with a sort of juvenile exaltation, nourished by the perusal of the great poets whom it had been impossible to keep from me. I wanted heroes like Racine's, or knights like Tancred. Mighty passions were my need, instantaneous affections, great and sublime deeds! I waited! But as I finally perceived that neither Britannicus nor Gon-

zalvo of Cordova presented himself, and that not even a meeting with Grandison was likely, I made up my mind to descend from the clouds, and sorrowfully reflected that I should be obliged to end by marrying, like everybody else, under the guidance of reason and expediency.

Various matches were proposed to my parents. Some did not meet with their approval, not being brilliant enough; the rest seemed to me out of the question because the suitors were unattractive. But at last M. Alexander Potocki declared himself, and as he, too, was acknowledged one of the best matches in Poland, he was accepted without hesitation. Our relations had arranged everything by letter, so that when Potocki arrived at Bialystok he knew beforehand that he would not be refused.

I can still fancy myself hearing his carriage drive into our court of honour. It was on an evening of the month of April; I had caught cold, and had been forbidden to leave my room. The sound of a post-horn roused me. I ran to the window, and saw a young man jump out, most gracefully, from a travelling calash, and quickly mount the steps to the main entrance. I at once told myself this could be none other than the expected traveller. The emotions I underwent very much resembled fright! What would I not have given to be able to put off that first interview until the morrow! But I was not consulted, and I saw M. Potocki enter with my mother on his arm.

He had been journeying afar; that was a great resource for a first call. He told us a lot of interesting things about London, about Paris—he had seen the *great Napoleon!* But on this point I found him not the least bit communicative. He spoke without particular enthusiasm of what he had seen, and did not seem at all dazzled by so much greatness and magnificence.

Tea was served, and we scrutinised one another. M.

Potocki had seen me when I was very young indeed, at my mother's. I remembered him; he had made the impression on me of a disdainful dandy who did not talk to little girls.

We met again at that happy age when time, having put the finishing touches to his task, seems to halt, as if to enjoy its contemplation, but ready to compensate himself, some day, for the brief respite. We looked at each other surreptitiously, and experienced surprise mingled with satisfaction. We were better pleased with our prize than we had anticipated being. Three weeks elapsed, at the end of which we thought we knew and suited each other perfectly. There was, however, not the slighest similarity in our characters and tastes.

Count Stanislaus Potocki, my future father-in-law, soon joined us, so as to be present at our wedding. The count was one of the foremost personages of those times, which abounded with men of head and heart. His brother Ignatius and himself had worked valiantly at the Constitution of May 3, and both were victims of their faithfulness, in a Russian and an Austrian dungeon expiating the noble impulse which had urged them to devote themselves to their country's liberty and independence. It is rare to see two brothers so richly endowed by nature; to the most pleasing exterior were added a superior mind and a prodigious education and memory, and, though men of the world, they knew everything and had time for everything. Prince Stanislaus, moreover, was gifted with artistic accomplishments to a degree I have never seen equalled by an amateur. Several journeys in Italy had helped to develop in him that noble love of the beautiful which constitutes, so to speak, an additional sense. Always kind and affable, he was always disposed to listen to those who came to him for advice. His light humour and extreme politeness contrasted oddly with a vivacity, an irritability, which often

gave rise to mirth. There were days when, at the least annoyance, he got angry like a child, and calmed down as quickly. It was above all funny to watch this statesman at play—this gentleman of taste, this great lord, who by his exquisite manners had been marked in every court of Europe—to see him roused to the pitch of throwing cards and counters at his partner's head. And yet he played for penny points, and never would be paid.

"Why," he exclaimed, in his amusing wrath, "if I were playing for blows with a stick, I should still want to win!"

I dwell upon these details since I take pleasure in speaking of my father-in-law, whom I dearly loved, and of whom I know nothing but good. I owe him everything I know of architecture; he enjoyed cultivating this passion for the arts in me, which has since been the delight of life, and which my mother had sought to instil into me.

But let us go back to my marriage, which took place at Wilna, where my father was stopping. As he was suffering severely from an attack of the gout, he had been forbidden to leave his room, and the ceremony was held in his saloon.

A few days later my father-in-law, tired of enforced inactivity, and desirous of resuming his usual pursuits, took us off to Warsaw, where my mother-in-law was awaiting me.

I took leave of my father with the dreadful presentiment that I should never see him again. His persistence in refusing to go away to take the waters cost him his life. He had become gloomy and melancholy, and left the country only as often as his health or business compelled him to go into town, where the contact with the Russian officials was odious to him. In order to escape it, his illness served as an excuse; he never went out, and even exempted himself from the ceremonial visits. General Beningsen, Governor

of Wilna for the time being, treated him with overwhelming consideration, and frequently came to see him. One day he was so far carried away as to relate to him all the details of the famous conspiracy which had put Alexander on the throne. He even spoke of the part he had taken in the assassination. So far as I remember, he claimed the honour of being the first to lay hands upon the unhappy monarch, who defended his life with greater courage than was expected of him. Beningsen experienced no diffidence in talking of this scene of horror, in which one man had long held out against five murderers. He regarded himself as a modern Brutus. To say truth Paul's tyranny and his extravagances, which partook of cruelty in a certain measure, justified those who, having failed to force his abdication, found themselves obliged to take his life; but it is none the less the fact that you could not listen without shuddering to him who thus *boasted* of having played an *active* part in the drama.

We left Wilna together. My mother preferred to remain at Bialystok, for she did not in any way wish to divert me from the duties my new position brought me. I felt a keen sorrow at separating from my mother. I had never left her before. She had taken a great interest in my education; I took my lessons in my room—some she gave me herself. Idle about everything not related to the things of the imagination or the arts, I would have liked to draw all day. And when, at thirteen, I read the "Iliad," I would not hear of any other book. My mother took alarm at what perhaps might have pleased a less sensible person. She was grave and cold; she had a just and sound mind; she was fond of study, and indulged in thinking from inclination. Never was there a more striking contrast than that existing between our characters.

My own experience has led me to see that education may,

COUNT LEVIN A. T. BENINGSEN.
(A leader in the murder of the Czar Paul in 1801.)

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at the utmost, modify the temperament, but that it cannot change it. My mother frowned on exuberant merriment, on the taste for society and dress. I hid a thousand little things from her; at the same time I never knew how to dissemble, and I made more mistakes than one by too much candour. I was brought up alone, my sole recreation being to talk with old friends; in spite of that my good spirits remained inexhaustible. None but good examples were shown me. I read none but serious books; none but things I might hear were told in my presence; but I nearly always guessed what was supposed to be kept from me. It may be that without such close watching I should not at all have responded to the exertions lavished on me, but I am sure I only knew well what I had been taught least.

I loved my mother tenderly, feeling that I owed her much, and that her high character demanded my fullest respect, but with this sentiment was connected a sort of fear which spoilt our intercourse. She wished for my confidence, and I often felt a desire to give it her entirely; but from the moment that my opinion or intention contradicted hers, she scolded me severely, and drove back a confession nearly slipping from my heart.

I stood in need of an affection, if not tenderer, at least more confidential. Among the young people with whom chance had thrown me, was Madame Sobolewska. I felt attracted to her; I liked the great sweetness of her face and manners. She was a few years older than I. To her advantages she joined so much modesty and *humility* that one could not envy her for being a universal favourite, at which she alone seemed surprised.

Whenever her agreeable and cultivated mind managed to escape from the *strict reserve* behind which she kept it concealed she was charming, and I have seen few women so amiable when she *dared* to be amiable. Her spirit shed

something elevated and pure over all her actions. I felt better at leaving her. At first I loved her by instinct. When I learnt how to think I loved her because I found she was perfect, and I shall love her all my life, because this love has become my heart's necessity and habit. Never have I had a secret thought or act from her; never has she believed me better than I am. In her heart I went to place my sorrows, my hopes, my joys, and my regrets, and I always found in her an indulgent friend, discreet beyond all proof, and a most gentle and pleasant companion.

My mother ended by approving of our intimacy; she was the only person she *allowed* me to love.

CHAPTER V

LANÇUT AND PULAWY

1803

SENTIMENTAL WALK BY MOONLIGHT—FEMININE GUILE—WEDDING VISITS—THE PRINCESS MARSHAL—HIS GRACE OF LAON—PULAWY—PRINCE ADAM CASIMIR CZARTORYSKI—HIS GENEROSITY—THE PARK AT PULAWY—THE GOTHIC HOUSE—REMINISCENCES OF THE GREAT FREDERICK—THE EMPEROR JOSEPH II.—PRINCE KAUNITZ.

My husband and I reached Warsaw at the finest season of the year, and were soon established in Willanow, a beautiful district, famous through the memory of John Sobieski, who had made a home there.

In taking possession of the charming apartments my mother-in-law had prepared for me, I fancied myself arrived at the summit of bliss. My mother had brought me up to habits of thrift, on principle, and I all at once found myself rich and independent.

Without being passionately in love with my husband, I began to conceive a very tender fondness for him. I met my friend Madame Sobolewska again; my adopted relatives were good and kind, and nothing was wanting to complete my happiness—unless a little more sense. Here is the proof of it.

A moonlight night was for some time to disturb the pure felicity I had been enjoying. I have already said that I was blessed with a romantic brain, and that a quiet, even state of things could not satisfy me for long. So the thought suddenly entered my head to have my husband madly in love with me.

One evening, as we were promenading the bank of the Vistula, under those venerable trees which had shaded the less unsophisticated loves of the beautiful Marie d'Arquien, I brought round the conversation to *sentiment.* I maintained that no happiness was possible on this earth except in a reciprocal attachment, both lively and enduring! My husband, after listening to me indulgently for a little while, looked at his watch, called my attention to the lateness of the hour, observed that our cousins were becoming very tiresome, and that it was time to go in!

I had started upon a note so different from that chosen by him for these remarks that, on reaching my room, I burst into tears, and called myself the most wretched woman in the world for being so misunderstood and taken in such a common way. I could not imagine that I might be loved as well in my room as out-of-doors in the moonlight.

From that instant I thought of nothing but of the means of giving rise to a passion to which I attached my whole future and all my happiness. After mature deliberation I believed to have discovered that to make a husband miserable he must first be made jealous, and, not wishing the participation of a third person in this little family poem, I wrought the notion of inditing an impassioned letter to myself. To make my epistle look more natural and real I sprinkled this avowal of a timid but ardent love with well-seasoned jokes about my surroundings. I disguised my handwriting so successfully that my husband (he found the note in an orange-tree box) was completely deceived, and

took it to his mother for their mutual amusement. Delighted at having so properly mystified my friends, I triumphed, without suspecting what turn things were about to take. The jokes my letter contained, though highly innocent, annoyed my mother-in-law; she read and re-read the note, examined the writing, and ended by discovering that I was the author of this little hoax.

It was decided to *put me to the test*, and to ascertain *how long* I would stand by a falsehood, which must have appeared the more culpable as its object was unknown. My father-in-law was sent to me.

Anxious, and already repenting what I had done, when I saw him enter my room with the demeanour of one coming to *question* me, I lost my head altogether, and, afraid to confess such silly conduct, denied it with extraordinary clumsiness.

My father-in-law proceeded most delicately, and, seeing that I persisted, retired in favour of my husband, who began the cross-examination over again. I was dying of shame, but made a desperate defence. Ultimately, however, he wrested the fatal secret from me. I shed torrents of tears, and cast myself at his feet. He forgave me, because he understood what motive had actuated me, and saw no more than a childish freak in my hoax. It was otherwise with my mother-in-law. She became very disadvantageously impressed as to my character, and insisted in ascribing this silly, absurd letter to a taste for intrigue. It was the first time in my life that I had done anything of the kind. I nearly fell ill from vexation, and as I was supposed to be approaching motherhood, every effort was made to pacify me.

But I understood perfectly well that the attentions lavished upon me were exceptional, and that nothing could restore my mother-in-law's confidence and affection, she, though endowed with grand qualities, not having a fine

enough mind to distinguish all the different shades of feeling which crowded my heart.

The hope of becoming a mother came as a timely diversion in my distressed condition, and as, above all, an *heir* was required, I became the object of a solicitude which might have been taken for extreme sympathy. I was quite ill for some time, which obliged my husband to postpone a round of visits we were to make, for I was to be presented to all all of my new-old relations.

As soon as I was in a fit state we left for the castle of Lançut, where my husband's grandmother, Princess Lubomirska, had set up her establishment. She was known as the Princess Marshal. It would hardly have been possible to meet with an individual who, in addition to many excellent qualities, boasted such peculiar whims. She liked neither her children nor her country, and from sheer tedium was perpetually moving from place to place. Estranged from everything but the old traditions of the court of France, she was better acquainted with the age of Louis XIV. than with the events which had agitated her own country. A spectator of the horrors that had disgraced the revolution of 1789, and an intimate friend of the Princess Lamballe, she hated all new ideas. To the princess, Napoleon was nothing but a *miscreant*, promoted by *lucky chances* to a height at which he *could never remain.* She avoided speaking of him, and when compelled to mention the abhorred name, she called the emperor *little Bonaparte.* Faithful to the Bourbons, she wore mourning for the Duc d'Enghien, and showered her charity upon all the "emigrants" she could pick up in the high roads.

When we got to Lançut we found His Grace the Bishop of Laon established in the castle. All the honours due to the tiara were rendered him.

When the princess made her journey to Vienna, which happened nearly every winter, since her advanced years, to-

gether with the *change in the dynasty*, had prohibited a stay in Paris, nothing changed at Lançut. Every morning the steward came for His Grace's orders. He was there as if in his own palace, and he surely was better off there than at home, for in no country have I seen any establishment at the same time so gorgeous and so elegant. As rich as a princess in the "Arabian Nights," the Lady Marshal had elected to indulge in English comforts and French tastes.

She had, in addition, the merit of worthily employing the immense fortune placed in her hands by chance. Her generosity was remarkable in so far as she was entirely reasonable in dispensing it, and gave the benefit of it chiefly to her numerous vassals. There was not a village where she had not set up a school, a doctor, or a midwife. Her agents were charged with supervising these charitable institutions, for, though she did require everything in her own house to be sumptuous and costly, she never neglected her poor.

But, curiously and inexplicably, this same individual, whose name was blessed by the needy, and of whom none of her surroundings could complain, was hard and unjust to her children, who nevertheless adored her.

From the first I perceived that my husband was being treated by her like a *grandson*, and that this antipathy extended to myself. Still I was not discouraged, and by making Louis Quinze caps for the princess worked out my pardon for being Alexander's wife.

After staying a fortnight at Lançut we repaired to Pulawy, a fine place belonging to Prince Czartoryski, brother to the Princess Marshal, and therefore our great-uncle. He was never called anything but Prince General. It was customary with us to be called by one's title, just as in France it was the custom to assume that of one's principal fief.

This castle differed entirely from that which we had just

left. Everything here was devoid of elegance; nothing was aimed at but to revive, or rather *continue*, old traditions, and to make no changes from ancestral habits. The intercourse was just as cordial as it was good-natured. At the very outset one felt at ease. Under frivolous externals the prince concealed the profound student. His condition was overlooked because of his jokes and frank jollity. His wit was subtle, brilliant, spontaneous; I have never met but the Prince de Ligne who could have been compared with him in this respect, but the Prince General had, besides, the noblest soul and the most elevated ideas. Had he not surrendered too soon to the seductions of society and all the futilities of life, few men would have ventured to oppose him, and his political influence would not have remained without notable results.

When I saw him for the first time his advanced age had as yet detracted nothing from the grace and quickness of his wit. He was a little dry, powdered old gentleman, irreproachably tidy and neat. I scarcely know on what occasion Joseph II. created him an Austrian field marshal, because he had never been to war. However that may be, under this foreign uniform and these hostile colours beat a noble heart, full of patriotism and steadfastness. His perfect kindness showed itself at all times, and he was adored throughout the country. He had a number of poor gentlemen educated at his own expense, he took a personal interest in their characters, followed their progress, made them travel, etc. A number of distinguished subjects owed the development of their abilities to what was called the *Pulawy School*, a school to which the prince's generosity gave an immense scope since it had branches as far as France and England. He thus compromised a large fortune, and incurred debts which his sons afterwards paid.

That was a fine aristocracy, and which, I venture to say,

could only be met with in Poland. When the Prince General had assured the future of a deserving family, he would go and secretly thank them for the confidence they had placed in him. His savings affected his own table solely. Highly frugal himself, and condemned by his physician to take his modest repast alone, he was always the first to laugh at our bad dinners. But there were fifty people at table, and at least a hundred lived on the dessert. When, having finished his hermit's meal, he circulated among us, it was a universal delight; he amused all the guests with his jovial humour. If he accidentally met his steward, he tapped him on the shoulder, asking him if he was still faithful *to the same system.*

"For," said he, "that rascal has made a vow never to serve but new wine and old beef!"

The princess, Isabel Czartoryska, was at that time busy with paupers. From early morning her door was besieged by all the poor and all the sick of the neighbouring villages. After attending to the wants of each one, she repaired to her magnificent garden, and spent a great part of the day in superintending the work there.

The buildings in the park at Pulawy are highly interesting. The most notable is devoted to historical and national relics; it is a copy of the Sibylline Temple so much admired at Tivoli. The intelligent architect to whom the erection of this edifice was entrusted went to Italy so as to reproduce it faithfully, and he acquitted himself of his task to a marvel. The same proportions are there, the same accuracy of detail, the same solidity of construction, and, as the Italian sky is the only thing not to be imitated, a dome of a single piece of glass idealises our foggy atmosphere.

Collected there are our kings' insignia, our queens' jewels, our great men's arms, as well as trophies captured from

the enemy. Nothing so grand, nothing so noble as an exhibition of patriotic relics among which every family become illustrious by a great deed has deposited its title to immortality!

The impediment of the temple bears an inscription which seems to recapitulate at once our greatness, our reverses, and our hopes: *The Past to the Future.* May this sacred bequest be spared by time, so that our posterity may sharpen their swords on the steps of this glorious temple!

A second building, called the Gothic House, is in an entirely different style, a happy combination of the Flemish and the Moorish, a structure recommended at different periods, one would say, and consummated with exquisite taste. The princess took pleasure in enriching it with treasures from all countries, and in mustering celebrities of all times there.

Close to a plait of Agnes Sorel's hair, kept in a magnificent rock crystal case, mounted with precious stones, is the unshapely bowl used for the anointing of the Russian czars, carried off from Moscow by our braves. Under an admirable portrait of Raphael, painted by himself, is Shakespeare's arm-chair, of which the worm-eaten wood is religiously covered with brass and velvet. Near by is a table that had been Voltaire's property, and the handsomely chased key opens a drawer in which innumerable valuables are accumulated. First, a collection of letters from distinguished men who adorned the age of Louis XIV., among them a fine one of Turenne, written entirely by his own hand a few days before his death; a little book, with its old-fashioned binding, containing plans of fortifications drawn by Marshal Vauban, who dedicated this set to the Duke of Burgundy; autograph letters of all the kings of France, from Francis I. to Napoleon; Madame de la Vallière's prayer-book, and a number of curiosities of the kind, which one regrets to pass by casually.

The walls of this building are covered with old inscriptions bearing principally upon Polish history. The princess was engaged upon a descriptive catalogue of her treasures, and engravings are now being made of the prominent objects of this valuable collection. It is a most extensive work, and shows to what degree the princess has studied the history of the various countries from which the relics were gathered. The French Revolution contributed to the contents of the Gothic House. At a time when antiquities were sold at a discount Countess Zamoyska, the princess's daughter, being in Paris in those delirious days, acquired articles now priceless.

I cannot say how interesting and agreeable it was to listen to her, who, after spending a lifetime in bringing so many curiosities and rarities together, exhibited them herself, telling some strange story about nearly every one.

In the evening, when, having wandered about the beautiful park and gardens, we met at the hostess', I took pleasure in calling up her varied reminiscences. She had travelled a great deal, and, though already far advanced in years, she discussed the historical personages she introduced as if she had left them the day before.

Being presented at the court of Frederick the Great, she had contrived to slip into his study one day, just as he had gone out. That, she said, was taking a man in the act.

In front of a desk covered with papers and maps a plate of cherries was provided with a ticket written by the king's hand: *I leave eighteen.* Quite near by an old hussar uniform, spread out over a sofa, awaited inexpensive repairs. Next to a letter from Voltaire, still open, lay a grocer's bill—the court grocer's. A sheet of music was thrown at haphazard on a desk, and not far from this harmonious appeal stood a curule chair, similar to that in the capitol, with this difference, that one is in old crimson, and the other was in wood with nothing to conceal its common use.

That was certainly a queer study for a king! Napoleon put his right of conquest to much better purpose than Frederick his right of birth.

An infinite amount of tact was requisite to keep out of trouble between the two courts in Berlin. The king had his, all composed of soldiers and men of learning. The queen, whom he never saw, gathered the fashionable women of the highest society and aristocracy about her. Whoever frequented one of the courts was in bad odour at the other. It was almost equivalent to ostracism.

When the king spoke of his wife, which rarely happened, he never called her anything but "old fool"; *vice versa* she called him "the old rascal," or "the old thief."

Frederick had a sparkling wit, but was harsh and disagreeable. Princess Czartoryska much preferred the conversation of Emperor Joseph II., with whom she had had the opportunity of becoming closely acquainted. The unhappy Marie-Antoinette, having admitted her to intimacy, had given her a letter to her brother, cautioning her to hand it over secretly, as all her actions were under minute observation. The princess eagerly acquitted herself of the delicate mission. The Emperor Joseph, after dilating on all the probable and possible chances of the Revolution, then already brewing, one day exclaimed, as if animated by a prophetic spirit:

"It will go on like that until a man of mighty genius seizes the reins of authority and puts things back in their place. As far as my sister is concerned, I believe it is, unfortunately, too late! And I much fear that she will be a victim to her own imprudence and to the weakness of the king, her husband."

Joseph II. was one of the wittiest men of his time. He liked society, and took pleasure in conversation. His immediate circle was composed of several charming women,

JOSEPH II., EMPEROR OF GERMANY.

From an old engraving.

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among whose number Princess Czartoryska occupied a prominent place. Some of her recollections were handed down to us.

One day, at the end of dinner, she related that she had known Prince Kaunitz, who had a varied reputation, and incidentally one for impudence. Having fine teeth, he attended to them without the slightest regard for his guests. As soon as the table was cleared his valet put a mirror, a basin, and brushes before him, and then and there the prince began his morning toilet over again, just as if he had been alone in his dressing-room, while every one was waiting for him to finish, to get up from the table.

I could not suppress my astonishment, and asked the princess if she, too, had waited.

"Yes, alas!" she replied, "I was so put out of countenance that I only recovered my senses at the foot of the stairs; but later on it was different: I complained of the heat, and left the table at dessert."

At this same dinner a Venetian nobleman, named Grandenigo, sat near Prince Kaunitz. The prince, who was in good humour, amused himself by addressing him at the top of his voice, dubbing him *grand nigaud*. The poor foreigner knew no French, and, taken aback by the immoderate laughter, asked his neighbour for an explanation.

"His Highness," was the answer, "likes people to be jolly at his table!"

But the Venetian, not quite reassured by this answer, remained moody, and took no notice of the dishes offered him. The prince, having noticed that this absent-mindedness interfered with the service, said aloud to his house steward:

"Why don't you give him a dig in the ribs?"

To hear such details would you not fancy yourself some centuries back? Certainly Prince Metternich, who to-

day fills Prince Kaunitz's place, would not venture such peculiar manners, even if he were tempted to do so, which I am far from presuming he ever would be, having always known him to be perfectly decorous and polite. I will not say as much for his wife.

PRINCE WENZEL ANTON VON KAUNITZ.

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CHAPTER VI

MYSTERIES

1803

RETURN TO TOWN—THE SEER—A TRAP SET—AN EVENING AT THE FRENCH THEATRE, WARSAW—MYSTERIOUS DRIVE—THE SOOTHSAYER'S DEN—CONSULTATION—THE BLACK CURTAIN RISES—AN APPARITION—THE SUPPER—KEY TO THE RIDDLE—PRINCE RADZIWILL—AN ANNOYING MOTHER-IN-LAW—BIRTH OF AN HEIR—NATOLINE.

WINTER took us back to town. My husband's parents were already settled there, and we went to live at their house. Soon after my mother moved into hers, to be present at my confinement.

I believe I have already made it plain that I had a taste for the marvellous, and that my imagination delighted in uncommon things. Knowing that my father-in-law was a freemason, and that he was a frequenter of the Grand Oriental, a very well known lodge then existing in Warsaw, I was seized with a violent desire to penetrate mysteries of whose importance I entertained exaggerated notions. I would burn with curiosity, while trembling with fear, when I was told of the shadows and flames through which you had to beat a path, of the windows from which you were

forced to leap into the abyss, of the nails on which you were obliged to walk!

I had vainly tried to make my father-in-law gossip; he laughed me in the face, and remained inscrutable, which threw me into despair. All of a sudden I thought I observed how he, usually so talkative and communicative, had moments of preoccupation. Often dinner was delayed for him, he arrived late, appeared abstracted, sometimes he even did not come at all. My mother-in-law evidently knew what the reason was of these absences, for they did not seem to trouble her; but she kept silence. I questioned my husband, who confirmed his father's preoccupation, but asserted not to know its reason.

Things remained at that for some time, while my curiosity only grew. At last, one fine day, my mother-in-law hazarded a half-confession, and told me she was beginning to fear the discovery of secret gatherings of which a celebrated *seer* was the object, and which gatherings engrossed my father-in-law more every day. She enjoined the most scrupulous discretion on me, and made me promise to say nothing to my husband, in pretence urging his possible anxiety. I shall not examine the case: did she do well or not to teach me to have secrets from my husband? The answer is delicate—but I will confess it cost me much not to speak to him of what exclusively occupied my mind.

My father-in-law being in poor health, his habits were very carefully regulated, and every day, about the same hour, he took a turn in a closed carriage. I frequently accompanied him, as in my condition I also required exercise, and the weather did not permit me to walk as much as I was accustomed to.

One morning, when we had driven farther than usual, he seemed more rapt and taciturn than ever. I could hold out no longer, and ventured a question—it was what he was trying to lead me unto.

After a few commonplaces he said, as if carried away in spite of himself, "If you were not so young, and if I might count on absolute secrecy, I could tell you some astonishing things."

What more was necessary? I begged, I implored, I even swore! And so I learnt that a seer versed in the occult sciences was in hiding in one of the suburbs of the town.

"I have seen more than one," said my father-in-law to me, "in the different countries I have travelled in, but never have I met with anything comparable to this."

He then confided to me that there were several, all clever people, (I knew them), who every evening went secretly to hear and see things—such extraordinary things that, if he told them to me, I should refuse to believe them!

I was listening so intently that I did not notice the carriage was entering the court of our house.

That day I was unable to reintroduce a subject of which I was thinking all day and dreaming all night.

The next day the confidences became more explicit. I found that for a sum of money, which would go to the poor, the seer affecting philanthropy, I might hope for admission across the threshold of the sanctuary, if not for initiation into all the wonders which adepts only have the right to know. It was much more than I dared ask; up till then my modest hopes had been limited to hearing an account of the miracles.

In high glee, I therefore hastened to get the money I had saved, and in return obtained a *half-promise;* because the first thing was to touch the seer's heart by the charities he could perform *gratis,* and thus imperceptibly dispose him to receive me.

These difficult negotiations absorbed some days more, which to me were as centuries; but at length my father-in-law came with the announcement that, having declared himself *responsible* for me, and my offering having been ac-

cepted, I should be called to hear what few ears had heard, and to see what few eyes had seen. I burst into such transports of joy as to frighten him. And now that I recollect all the emotions to which I was exposed I still feel surprise that my health was not injured.

The day of the ordeal once fixed, it was agreed that I should go to the French theatre as usual, and that at the appointed hour my father-in-law should sign to me, that I should then complain of the heat, and that he should offer to take me home. Only he advised me to provide myself with a veil, seeing that a woman of quality must never take the risk of being recognised when she goes on a mysterious errand, wheresoever it be.

At the moment I got into the carriage I perceived that the lamps were not lit, and the servants not wearing livery.

"It is compulsory under such circumstances," said my father-in-law. "I suppose that will not frighten you."

And didn't I vow that nothing could shake my courage! I nevertheless began to feel my nerves greatly agitated.

The carriage travelled with extreme speed. We thus traversed a considerable distance. As it was very cold the windows were up, and I could not tell through what streets we were passing. The coachman had been told to go *where he went every evening*. Suddenly we left the pavement!

"Then it is outside the town?" I enquired.

"Yes, of course, because this man is obliged to hide; were he discovered he would be arrested. And further," added my father-in-law, "do not for an instant forget that the least indiscretion would infallibly ruin us."

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "How absurd governments are to thus persecute science!"

Soon the carriage rolled over paving stones; we entered a court; we stopped, and the footman silently opened the door. My father-in-law got out quickly, and asked me to

THE GRAND NATIONAL THEATRE AT WARSAW.
Engraved by Pilinski after Corazzi.

THE KOPERNIK HOUSE IN WARSAW,
Visited by Napoleon in 1807. Built in 1473.
From an engraving by Pilinski after Mielcarzewicz.

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wait a few minutes for a light. Entire darkness and stillness reigned. I already felt a little less heroical. However a lively curiosity still kept up my courage. My father-in-law came back in the company of a little man in a black coat; he was carrying a dark lantern. The staircase was narrow and steep, and I climbed up with difficulty.

"So this," I thought, "is how beings live who are gifted with occult faculties."

When we had entered a small antechamber, which was cold and gloomy, our guide, who was the seer's domestic, bowed without proffering a word, and left us in complete darkness.

"Now," said my father-in-law, "I shall give the proper sign!"

He knocked three times in quite a special manner. After a moment's waiting we heard a sepulchral voice, which uttered but these three words: *"Enter, my brother!"*

At that instant I began to tremble like a leaf, and I caught my father-in-law's arm.

The room in which we now were was large and dim. A small lamp furnished with a shade threw a feeble light; the lamp was standing on a large table in the centre of the room covered with a black cloth. Seated by this species of desk, an old man, whose strange costume reminded one rather of the Oriental than the European, was reading attentively. Absorbed in his book, the man did not so much as raise his eyes at our approach. He wore enormous spectacles, his white hair fell over his shoulders, and his bent, so to say suffering, posture indicated long labours. A wooden inkstand, a death's head, and a pile of huge folios heaped on the table completed the scenic accessories.

The place had no furniture, the walls were bare; I only noticed, quite at the end, a great curtain of black cloth, which covered the whole of the back wall and seemed to

conceal something. Near by was a convex mirror of vast dimensions mounted in a black wooden frame.

"It is there," thought I, "it is surely in that mirror that the *future* appears, and the curtain probably veils fantastic apparitions." For to my eyes everything wore a supernatural aspect.

We had come in noiselessly.

"Master!" said my father-in-law at last, and the old man raised his head. "Here is the young woman I mentioned to you; her heart, *as you know*, is full of *charity*, and her spirit eager for light; but as she yet knows neither Greek nor Latin, vouchsafe to speak to her in French."

The seer turned to me.

"What do you wish, my sister?" he said in the gravest tone.

What I certainly wished for most at that particular moment was to be back in my saloon, with the candlesticks lighted, in the midst of the pleasant company awaiting me there. But I took good care not to show my fright, and merely threw my father-in-law a supplicating glance, so as he might help me to say what *I was supposed to wish.*

"She knows, master, that you rule over nature, that your profound knowledge enables you to see everything, and that the spirits are at your order. She would therefore like to witness one of those marvels in which you are proficient."

The old man bowed his head, and appeared absorbed in thought. The deepest silence once more prevailed. Finding myself near the folios, I mechanically put out my hand, with the thought of opening one of the volumes.

"Do not touch that!" cried the little man. "You would see pictures that would freeze you with terror; the profane cannot examine the contents of my books unimperilled!"

This rather long sentence revealed to my ear the sound of a not unfamiliar voice, and I went over to my father-in-law to whisper to him:

"That is absolutely M. de R——'s voice."

"That is true; the first time I was struck by it, as you are," he replied so simply as to leave me no suspicion.

"What does the sister say?" asked the old man.

"She admires the grave and majestic sound of your voice," answered my father-in-law.

The seer bowed with apparent humility, like a man from whom the awe he instils has wrested the avowal of a rash promise.

"Since the brother *demands*," he said, "and since he is answerable for you, my sister, speak freely: what do you ask to see? The beasts of the Apocalypse, the dead, or the absent?"

I felt faint at the bare idea of the dead and the beasts, and I replied: "The absent."

"I warn you," resumed the seer, "that my power does not reach beyond the seas, and that it only extends over a surface of twelve thousand six hundred and forty leagues. From this decide whom you wish to see appear."

My affections being concentrated on a single spot of the globe, I excused him twelve thousand six hundred and thirty leagues, and asked to see my mother, my husband, and my friend Madame Sobolewska.

"Very well. But you are not yet an adept, and you can therefore," he gravely went on, "not witness the preliminary ceremonies. Retire to the adjoining room for a minute."

Whether I liked it or not, I was obliged to return to the cold and gloomy antechamber we had passed through on our arrival. It was the last trial, and not the least! To be left thus alone, after the emotions I had gone through, seemed to be beyond my strength. Propped up against the door, I began to reproach myself with an apparently criminal inquisitiveness, and, fervently praying to my good angel to protect me, I promised him faithfully never to try anything of the kind again.

After a few minutes my father-in-law opened the door, and called me in.

"Sister, you shall be satisfied! But I warn you, that if you take one step or speak one word the charm will be broken and everything will disappear. Now attend carefully. You will see those who are dear to you, and in the very place where they are at this hour."

After delivering this speech with imposing solemnity, the old man clapped his hands three times. The black curtain I had noticed when we came in opened as if by itself, and through a thin mist I saw the box I had lately left and the three people mentioned, who bore the appearance of listening attentively, as though the play, of which I had only seen the first act, was not yet over. The features, the dress, the gestures, all, in fact, was so perfectly exact that I could not suppress a cry of astonishment. The curtain fell, and I heard shouts of laughter.

"I declare!" said my father-in-law, "you have exhibited such bravery that you cannot be refused complete initiation into all the witchcraft practised in this house. Come."

And drawing me to the mysterious curtain, he opened it; and I saw, not through a mist, but quite distinctly, a lavishly bedecked table, lit up with a hundred candles, about which all our friends were supping jovially. I was dumb with amazement.

They got up, they surrounded me, they asked me what I thought of my taste for the marvellous.

The marvellous! I could not speak, I did not know what to reply. I was unable to distinguish the reality from the imitation.

"But where are we?" I asked at last.

"In the house of M. M——, who is away from home. You have come by a thousand turns; you have even been outside the town."

"And the mysterious entrance?"

"A little back staircase which you had never been up."

"And the seer?"

"M. de R——; you were on the point of recognising him by his voice."

"And the mist?"

"Gauze."

"And the box?"

"Painted on paper."

"And the large folios I was not allowed to touch?"

"*The Journey to Naples and Sicily.*"

"And the banquet?"

"Your savings of a hundred ducats devoted to the seer's charities."

"But then my father-in-law's fits of abstraction?"

"A long prepared hoax."

The cleverest, the most surprising thing in all this deception was to have calculated the degree of my courage and of my affections so well, and to have guessed in advance that I should not trouble the repose of the dead, and that I should want to call up the very people my friends had thought of.

My mother and my husband had not been admitted into the secret of the preparations; it was only coming away from the play that my mother-in-law apprised them of the place to go to, and of what was to happen. It had been justly feared that their solicitude might lead them to betray a mystery on which the success of the supper party depended, and which was not without a useful object. I learnt how easy it is to lead the imagination astray and to abuse credulity, as I am sure that had I left at the instant the curtain fell, and had I been taken home by the same circuitous way that I had come, it would afterwards have been difficult to guide me to a proper appreciation of things of the kind.

I should have remained convinced that seers have intimate relations with spirits, and that nothing supernatural is impossible to them.

I was not at all piqued at having been tricked; quite the contrary, no one enjoyed it more. But that evening brought me an immeasurable series of revelations. For at least a fortnight I must perforce relate to those who had not been there the details of the whole proceedings, explain to some, reassure others, repeat the same thing ten times a day, say the same names over and over. I thought it would kill me, and was finally tempted to answer like one of Prince Radziwill's familiars, who, called to witness by that notorious joker to prove that the prince had taken part in a famous battle, said: "I could scarcely guarantee the fact, my Lord Prince, having been killed in the beginning of the action." During said battle the prince, seeing his ammunition would fail, picked up the balls that came after him with his hands, and immediately loaded the cannons with them, so as to send them back to the enemy hot. This same Radziwill, who was living in Paris at the commencement of Louis XV.'s reign, created a great sensation by his extravagances. He never bought but half or quarter of a shop, saying it took too much time to *select*, and that it was shorter to throw the things you did not want out of the window afterwards. The grateful Parisians gave his name to an arcade which still exists.

The rest of the winter passed quietly, without any remarkable occurrences, unless for myself, whose yet novel mode of life was composed of a thousand little happenings which cling to the memory in the ratio of the impression they made.

Though living with our parents, we had separate households. I therefore thought it quite allowable to invite guests, and occasionally to gather about me the people I

liked best. We were so considerate as to take the days when my mother-in-law was not alone, and we believed she would raise no objections to our little parties, where the oldest guest was under thirty. Alas, it was not so! She was piqued, and thought she saw an impolite exclusion in what was simply a desire to be rid of ceremony and enjoy the pleasures of people of our own age. Had she expressed herself openly, we would readily have sacrificed those brief hours of boisterous jollity; but she was angry *in silence,* and from that time a kind of constraint sprang up between us which never vanished.

The 17th of March, after twenty-eight hours of the keenest sufferings, I brought a son into the world, whose birth, so ardently desired, crowned my hopes.

Since then I have had two children, but never have I again felt the sensation which the first cry of that first child gave me. My joy was a fever which for some minutes obliterated my sense of weakness; I tried to get up to go over to look at my son. But I fell back exhausted by the extreme pains I had gone through. Young and strong, I quickly recovered, and the ninth day, stretched out on my sofa, I received the usual visits of congratulation.

It seemed as though my happiness was assured for the future by the birth of an heir. Alas! with health the petty bickerings returned, and we finally concluded that although we were very well off with our relatives, it would be best to be at home. It was at this time that we went to reside at Natoline, and that I began to take an interest in that delightful country-seat.

I did so most ardently. I sketched out all the plans; I entered into all the details, Without having seen them, I pictured Italy and Greece. My father-in-law was my mentor, and seemed proud of having made an *artiste* of me. From that moment I abandoned all other fancies, and my

pride and my ambition were concentrated upon Natoline, that little gem which to me seemed worthy of immortality.

When we were short of money I sold some of my diamonds, so as to buy bronzes and marbles. My husband appeared to share my tastes, and, though rather cold and unenthusiastic, took pride in my purchases.

Happy months, when sleepless nights were never due to anything but a rioting imagination! How often did I dream with open eyes! How impatiently did I await daybreak, so that I might jot down on paper the ideas that had originated in the calm of the night!

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER AT WILLANOW

1805

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST—PRINCE ADAM CZARTORYSKI—THE DINNER—ALEXANDER'S CONVERSATION—THE VISITORS' BOOK.

ONE evening, as we were quietly drinking tea by our fireside, a letter was handed to my husband. As its contents evidently surprised him, I insisted on knowing its source. He told me to guess who the stranger was that was announced for the next day. Well might I try; I could not guess.

How, indeed, could I have imagined that it was the Emperor Alexander and his train whom we were to prepare to receive?

The more sovereigns I saw, the more I became convinced that they have no inkling of the inconvenience and embarrassment they stir up. From the cradle up they hear so much of the bliss they shower on those who receive them, that they do not in the least imagine what a nuisance their visits are.

Our servants did wonders. The proximity of a large town being of assistance in an *impromptu* of this sort, they

succeeded beyond our expectations, and at two o'clock all was ready.

I had invited my uncle, Prince Poniatowski, as well as his sister, Countess Tyszkiewicz, begging them to help me do the honours at this royal banquet—me, poor novice, who was to begin with an autocrat!

The emperor arrived at four o'clock. He was young and handsome; but, although he had a very good figure, he seemed to me elegantly turned rather than nobly and imposingly. His manner lacked the sort of ease which one expected. He appeared to be constrained; his excessive politeness had something commonplace about it; and everything, to the *starchness* of the tightest of uniforms, lent him the air of a charming officer much more than that of a young ruler.

Prince Adam Czartoryski, a son of the Prince General's, accompanied Alexander. It was said that the emperor, influenced by this friend, who knew no affection but love of his country, had inspired the autocrat with the resolve to set Poland up again. What there is no doubt of is that the Prussians, then masters of Warsaw, would not allow the emperor to pass through the town, for fear of the enthusiasm his presence might evoke at a moment when it was openly affirmed that he was about to declare himself King of Poland. And that it was which secured us the honour of his visit.

The Prussian General Kalkreuth, the commandant at Warsaw, had been ordered to go to meet Alexander, and escort him back to the frontier—a supererogatory ceremony which blinded no one, and made every one laugh.

I do not remember how my husband arrived at His Majesty's wishes with regard to the persons who were to sit at his table. Anyhow, only Prince Czartoryski and General Kalkreuth had that honour. The rest of the staff dined in

EMPEROR ALEXANDER I. OF RUSSIA.

From an engraving of 1806, by Hopwood.

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a separate room. Prince Poniatowski having sent his excuses, my aunt came without him. We were therefore only six at table.

A place had been laid in solitude at the head of the table. The emperor seemed put out about it, and pushed his armchair close to my seat. He ate little and talked a great deal. His conversation was simple and reserved; it was not to be gathered that his resources were great, but it was impossible not to allow him elevation of sentiment and infinite tact. The events which brought him were scarcely hinted at, and his few remarks on the subject were very guarded. The generals composing his staff were not so modest; they asked us for commissions to do in Paris, thinking that their conquests and their triumphs would stop only there. But a month after our illustrious host's departure we learnt that he had been beaten at Austerlitz, and had retreated in a continuous march to St. Petersburg.

To go back to the dinner, which was a very prolonged affair: Alexander could not hear distinctly, and, like all *young deaf people,* affected a very low tone of speech. You did not venture to make him repeat what he had said, out of respect, so you generally answered at random.

After passing into the drawing-room he remained there a good two hours, *standing up* the whole time. It was asserted his clothes were so tight that any other attitude was uncomfortable. About midnight he finally retired, choosing the simplest rooms made ready for his reception.

The next day we had to rise early, to take part at His Majesty's breakfast, and go through the leave-taking. My health was not at all suited for all these exertions. About to enter his carriage, the emperor most affably asked me if there was no way of expressing his thanks.

I had a strong notion, seeing him so well disposed, to ask for *Poland.* But a look from my husband, who had guessed

my thoughts, checked that patriotic outburst, and sent me back to the limits prescribed by custom and by etiquette, which does not lend itself to any species of *improvisation*, and one of the most positive precepts of which is never to ask princes for anything they have not beforehand decided not to refuse.

So we had to content ourselves with asking Alexander to inscribe his name in the large visitors' book at Willanow, where all strangers commemorate themselves. He was good enough to sign his name on the first page. Little did we think that the name of Napoleon would soon be written next to the Emperor of Russia's.

GENERAL KALKREUTH.

From an old engraving.

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Part the Second

THE FRENCH AT WARSAW

1806—1807

CHAPTER I

THE VANGUARD

END OF THE WAR WITH PRUSSIA—ENTRY OF A FRENCH REGIMENT INTO WARSAW—M. DE F——T—MURAT—BALL GIVEN BY PRINCE PONIATOWSKI—MURAT'S PLUME.

THE first summer of our residence in the country sped by extremely fast, absorbed as we were in innumerable tasks and schemes. We returned to Warsaw about the end of October.

Daily newspapers not being, as they are to-day, one of the prime necessities of life, very few people subscribed. On post days the gates of the privileged were besieged by all who were curious to know what was going to become of the Prussian monarchy.

No one doubted Napoleon's star for an instant. He was certain to come back victorious from this campaign, as he had from all the others; but nobody expected so prompt a triumph over an army which gloried in its unbroken discipline and its recent successes. From that moment the annihilation of Prussia and the re-establishment of Poland seemed a probable result to the wisest.

The public disguised its sentiments and hopes so little

that the Prussians, the detested masters of a country they had not conquered, but which had fallen to them in the Partition of 1795, could not be mistaken as to the feelings the events called forth. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that no one was interfered with. The Prussian authorities contented themselves with intercepting as much news as possible. Newspapers were stopped, letters burnt, the triumphal march of the French army was carefully kept from us; but the glorious echo of the victory of Jena and Napoleon's entry into Berlin could not be stifled for long.

Henceforth every brain was heated, and no further efforts were made to conceal our delight. The restaurants were filled with ebullient youths, who, clinking glasses, sang patriotic songs, and shouted for their *liberators* and their *brothers*.

General Kalkreuth, the commandant of the town, having become secretly apprised that the emperor had left Berlin and was marching upon Posen, despatched a courier in full haste to get instructions, for, being forgotten amid all the confusion, he was in a very awkward situation. All the while planning his retreat, he contrived so well to keep the movements of the Grand Army wrapt in mystery that we learnt of the departure from Berlin and Napoleon's entry into Posen almost the same day.

That was the signal of retreat for the Prussian authorities, who decamped from Warsaw, hooted by the street boys, and went to join the Russians encamped on the other side of the Vistula. The King of Prussia wrote to Prince Poniatowski, naming him governor of the town and commander of a national guard that did not exist. He begged him to watch over the safety of the inhabitants, asseverating that he knew of no worthier hands within which to place such important interests. But the Prussians, not having left a single musket behind, the prince was reduced to arm a hun-

NAPOLEON'S ENTRY INTO BERLIN.

From an engraving by Derby after Raffet.

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dred fellows as well as he could, and they, with their pikes and loaded sticks, installed themselves in the guard houses. This state of affairs lasted but a few days.

The 21st of November, in the morning, the arrival of a French regiment was announced. How shall I describe the enthusiasm with which it was received? To understand such emotions properly one must have lost everything and believe in the possibility of hoping for everything—like ourselves. This handful of warriors, when they set foot on our soil, seemed to us a guarantee of the independence we were expecting at the hands of the great man whom nothing could resist.

The popular intoxication was at its height; the whole town was lit up as if by magic. That day, forsooth, the authorities had no need to allot quarters to the new arrivals; people fought for them, carried them off, vied with each other in treating them best. Those of the citizens who knew no French, not being able to make themselves understood, borrowed the dumb language which belongs to all countries, and, by signs of delight, handshakings, and bursts of glee, made their guests comprehend that they freely offered them all the house contained, *the cellar included.*

Tables were even laid in the streets and squares. Our future independence, the brave army, the great Napoleon, were toasted many a time. There was embracing and fraternising and a little too much drinking, for the soldiers ended by giving way to excesses which momentarily cooled the ardour which had prompted their reception.

The next day Murat, then Grand Duke of Berg, made his entry on horseback. A quantity of plumes were to be seen, braided uniforms, gold and silver lace, etc. Lodgings had been prepared for him at the Hotel Raczynski; but, being uncomfortable there on account of a smoking chimney, he came to settle in our house.

I was very anxious to see a Frenchman. Those who had come the day before did not count; we only saw them as a *crowd*. The supper hour having struck, my father-in-law, Count Potocki, sent a request to His Highness' adjutants to come up. To my great disappointment, these gentlemen declined; they never supped.

But scarcely had we sat down at table when a noise of sabres and spurs came from the next room, and we saw a hussar officer enter, who advanced with an eagerness one only exhibits towards good friends.

"Ah! It is Charles!" exclaimed my husband, who had known him in Paris, and, after embracing him, presented him to us.

The name was not new to me; I had heard M. de F——t spoken of as a very seductive man, who had excited a deep passion in one of my most distinguished countrywomen.

Sensible women pay little attention to successful men, or at least are on their guard against them. Those who are less sensible, and who rely on *their principles*, on the other hand, find a certain pleasure in braving such men. I acknowledge without further ado that I was one of these. I therefore felt greatly displeased at being caught unawares, and at not being well dressed. I bowed my head, determined not to be seen and not to look; but the sound of a voice the like of which I had never heard shook that resolve, and I raised my eyes to look at the face of the man who spoke so harmoniously. He is, I believe, the only person I have chanced to hear before seeing.

Charles was twenty-one or twenty-two; without being really handsome, he had a charming face, which was veiled with a melancholy that seemed to betray a secret sorrow. His manners were elegant without fatuity, his conversation clever, his opinions independent; no one ever more fully realised the idea one has of the hero of a romance and of a

true knight. And his mother, Madame de Souza, used him as a type that she reproduced under different names in her delightful novels.

He spent a part of the evening with us. He was besieged with questions as to this remarkable campaign, finished in a few days.

His answers were in the best taste, without the least swagger; he understood the art of conversation like a real Frenchman, never exhausting one's interest, passing from one subject to another smoothly yet not too slowly. Towards the end of the evening I was drawn into the talk; I thought to perceive that he listened to me with pleasure, and I confess I was flattered.

Two days after his arrival Prince Murat, having sent to me to announce his visit, in the evening came up with a numerous attendance. His face was without nobility and entirely devoid of expression. He had the majestic air of actors who are playing kings. It was easily seen that his manners were sham, and that he usually had others. He did not talk badly, for he watched himself carefully; but his Gascon accent and some too soldierlike phrases belied the "prince" a little. He was fond of telling of his feats of arms, and talked war to us for over an hour.

The taking of Lübeck was his favourite theme: he had entered that place at the head of his cavalry, like one going to an assault. It was a fine exploit, was that, but rather unpleasant to hear related. Blood ran in the streets, horses reared at the heaps of dead bodies. This too faithful picture of war was not comforting to us poor women, who were to see all those we were most deeply interested in rushing to arms.

Murat had already contracted princely habits; he did not converse, he talked, flattering himself that you listened, if not with approbation at least with respectful deference.

Rising at last and bowing with dignity, he said he would

return to his study, to examine the map of Poland and the positions of the Russian army.

A few days later there was a grand ball at the palace. Murat, desirous of showing himself off, had told Prince Poniatowski that, having heard of the beauty of the Polish ladies, he wanted to judge of them for himself. My uncle gave a magnificent party. I was indisposed, and could not go, but my friends brought me all the news post haste. The prince had appeared in *full uniform.* I afterwards saw him in this somewhat theatrical costume, such as was suited to a prince *of his blood.* There was nothing to be admired about it all except his plume—that tri-coloured plume which was always seen floating where there was menace of danger! And the Poles, fascinated by such valour, would have willingly put a crown over that glorious plume!

We never knew if Napoleon had held out a hope of this kind to his brother-in-law, but it is known that Murat entertained this hope, and was pleased to compare Sobieski's fortunes with his own. It was always one of his favourite topics of conversation; he recurred to it incessantly, and wanted to be informed of everything relating to the rise of that soldier-king.

CHAPTER II

NAPOLEON'S ENTRY INTO WARSAW

THE TRIUMVIRATE—THE PREPARATIONS—SECRET ARRIVAL OF THE EMPEROR—THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION.

As soon as it was known that the emperor had reached Posen it was decided to send a deputation to meet him. This was no easy matter. All persons of distinction were at their country places awaiting the issue of events. Moreover, the people whose property was under the Emperor of Russia's control also held aloof; they profited by the experience of the past, and knew that a decree of confiscation would be the inevitable result of an imprudent action.

The difficulty was solved by improvising a rather inferior triumvirate, to be sent to anticipate the conqueror. His eagle eye quickly detected the standing of this deputation, whom he addressed in the most ordinary terms, not in the least calculated to sustain the hopes to which his coming had given birth. Prince Murat gave the authorities to understand that the emperor would appear with a certain degree of pomp, if only to send a brilliant article to the "Moniteur." Triumphal arches were speedily constructed, illuminations were got ready, inscriptions were composed, wreaths were plaited. All these preparations were superfluous. Napoleon amused himself with disappointing the

general expectancy; he arrived at four in the morning on a shabby horse he had got at the last relay station.

It may readily be imagined what alarm this occurrence caused at the palace, where all were wrapt in deepest slumbers. The emperor went to the sentry box himself, to wake up the sentinel, who gave the proper signal. The commotion was all the worse as the repairs it had been necessary to undertake in the palace, uninhabited for many years, were not finished.

Most luckily, the apartments of the last king, left intact, seemed but to be awaiting the new guest. This part of the palace, built in the reign of Stanislaus Augustus, bears that stamp of perfection that escapes the havoc of time and the tyranny of fashion.

The emperor had allowed no one but Rustan, his Mameluke, to accompany him. The carriages had been left sticking in the mud—there were as yet no highroads, and the crossroads were impassable at that season.

No sooner arrived, than the emperor had it given out that he would interview the authorities in the evening, and also persons who had the right to be presented to him.

I still feel some emotion at the recollection of the impatience with which we waited for those who had just been admitted to the palace. My father-in-law was at the head of the official delegation. He returned at ten o'clock at night, less pleased and more astonished than I could explain.

Napoleon had spoken with the volubility and prolixity which, in him, indicated a sort of nervous excitement. He had talked a lot, without, however, saying anything encouraging. I dare even say that, on reflection, he would have liked to withdraw sundry remarks that escaped him.

After expatiating on what he had recently accomplished in Prussia, minutely detailing the motives which had urged that war upon him, he dwelt on the tremendous obstacles

to be overcome in order that so large an army might advance and be supplied with sufficient food.

"But," he added, in conclusion, "no matter!" And, putting his hands into his pockets, he added: "I have the Frenchmen there! By appealing to their imagination I can do what I like with them!"

A sort of silent surprise depicted itself on the faces of all his hearers.

After a pause he added: "Yes—yes—it's just as I tell you!"

And, taking a pinch of snuff, to recover his breath, he resumed his ardent discourse. He launched out violently against the Polish magnates, who, in his opinion, did not manifest enough zeal and patriotism. He cried:

"There must be devotion and sacrifices and blood! Otherwise, you will never come to anything!"

But in all this flow of words, not one passed his lips which might have been construed as a promise. Consequently, the most sensible came back unsatisfied from this audience, but resolved to do anything that honour and love of country dictated.

Henceforth military organisation, recruiting, etc., were all the talk.

Everything in reason was given up, and the little retained the French took by force.

Whatever Napoleon may have said about the lack of zeal of the magnates, I can assert that never in any country were such tremendous sacrifices so cheerfully rendered.

Hardly a day elapsed which did not bring the news of some voluntary offer, some patriotic gift. When the money was exhausted we sent our plate to the mint. In the cantonments the officers' expenses were defrayed by the agricultural proprietors.

A rich gentleman, who had wished to do the magnificent

to one of the most famous marshals, was not a little surprised to hear, the next day, that his silver had disappeared with the hero's vans. This was considered too much of a good joke, and reported to the emperor, who, indignant at such conduct in a friendly country, at once ordered the restitution of the plate, and put the *abstraction* down to the account of the people of the marshal's household, who were quite unused to being reckoned with in this manner.

CHAPTER III

FIRST HOSTILITIES

PRINCE BORGHESE—THE SICK CHILD—DEVOTION OF M. DE F——T—SAVARY'S IDEA—PULTUSK—RECEPTION AT THE PALACE—PRESENTATION TO THE EMPEROR.

I WAS in the habit of receiving a number of French people. My husband always took part in these gatherings, and helped me to do the honours.

Sometimes we played cards, oftener we conversed. Prince Borghese, the emperor's brother-in-law, was one of our frequent visitors, but no one took any notice of him. I shall never forget how, in the short periods in which the conversation became *a little* serious, he went for some chairs, arranged them two by two in the middle of the room, and amused himself by humming tunes and dancing square dances with these mute supers.

My son August in the meanwhile fell ill. The whole house was disorganised; I was separated from my child. He occupied one of the wings of the house adjoining the apartments given up to Prince Murat's adjutants; to see my poor child, I had to cross the courtyard. It was the month of December; the short walk, become dangerous because the pathway was slippery, had been strictly forbidden me on account of my condition. Unable to see my son at any moment, I imagined him far worse than he was, and, not

being disposed to join in the pleasures of the others, I retired much earlier than usual that day.

At dawn I sent to the nurse for news. What was my surprise when, instead of a verbal answer, a bulletin was handed me describing the whole course of the night! I knew the number of times the little invalid had taken his dose, how long he had slept, what his degree of fever had been! My mother's heart, without knowing the writing, guessed whose it was.

That day I felt embarrassed when addressing M. de F——, and as I ventured a few words of thanks he answered:

"This is an instance, to be sure, where the simplest things are made a merit of. I was on duty last night. In your son's room there was a comfortable lounge where I installed myself, and, not wishing to drop off to sleep, I tried to become interested in what was going on about me. Your child is out of all danger," he added, in accents that went right to my heart.

I could not speak—he took my hand, pressed it, without daring to put his lips to it, and quickly went away.

From that instant a sort of intimacy sprung up between us. One might have said an old and sacred friendship which had all the charm of mysterious and timid new love. Faithful to my obligations, I would not even admit the possibility of a sentiment which ought to have been destroyed, and I was content to deny the danger.

It seemed permissible to feel *friendship* for a man who combined all the qualities one would have wished for in a brother. The troubles I had disappeared when I met that gentle and melancholy look, when I heard Charles sing those exquisite romances, that no one sang as he did. I forgot, in fact, and that was my worst mistake, that a young woman ought to have no confidant and no friend but

her husband. But then why did mine not remind me of this?

The winter of 1807 was extremely severe. The country, already impoverished by the passage of the Russian army, found its resources at an end when it came to supplying the wants of a hundred thousand French concentrated at a single place! The troops suffered a great deal, and began to murmur, for they were short of everything.

Savary, then the emperor's adjutant, proposed what he termed a *vigorous* step—to starve the town by closing the gates, and to seize the victuals which were every day brought in for the sustenance of the population.

Napoleon, tired of the murmurings of his "grumblers," acceded to this idea, and the orders were given. We were thus almost condemned to die of starvation. The *friend* warned us under the seal of secrecy, of what was about to happen. An indiscretion might have ruined him; so the evil had to be parried without compromising M. de F——. We took counsel together, and my husband decided that, upon the pretext of a sudden journey, we would have provisions taken in. Most happily these precautions became superfluous. General Berthier and M. de Talleyrand having had the courage to represent to the emperor that he ran the risk of provoking a rebellion, it was concluded to force the Austrian line of outposts, which secured us, and the army too, food in abundance.

While surprise was beginning to be declared because of the apparent tranquillity that reigned at the palace, and while the ladies were becoming offended because the emperor evinced so little anxiety to see them, Napoleon was making plans of attack, and, without being taken aback by the rigours of the season, he departed hastily, so as to present himself before the Russians encamped on the other side of the Vistula, in the little town of Pultusk. The fighting

continued for some days without particular results. The winter stopped everything. Continual rains had so ruined the roads that the cannon stuck in the mud. Some of the soldiers perished in the bogs. Nothing to equal it had ever been witnessed before, and he, whose genius had up to that time seemed to dominate the elements, saw himself obliged to retreat after having harassed and driven back the enemy, whom he yet left in condition to offer a long resistance.

Not without reason was the effect on Napoleon of this first reverse feared, and it was in trembling that the authorities went to wait upon him at the palace.

But, to the great astonishment of all, he showed himself quite undisturbed.

"Well," he said, "your mud has saved the Russians; let us wait for the frost."

He then spoke of the government of the country, insisting on the need of introducing perfect order and foresight into the methods of supplying the wants of the army, mentioning the points where stores ought to be kept, and entering upon all the details with admirable lucidity and an already complete knowledge of the places, things, and men to be utilised.

Things were different this time from the first. All who went to the palace came back penetrated with admiration for the reach and depth of this genius, as fit to conquer as to govern.

My father-in-law was so kind as to come to give me an account of what had happened at that interview. He had barely sat down when we heard a great clamour of men and horses. It was Prince Murat coming in with fuss and bustle. He, too, was returning from this short campaign, followed by his whole staff.

Fortunately, no one was absent from muster, though it

MARSHAL BERTHIER.

From an engraving by Lignon after a drawing by Vigneron.

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would have been according to the prince's habits to be caracoling before the bullets at all the outposts.

A few days after it was announced that at last there was to be a reception for the ladies. So it was to be our turn to see the great man and form an opinion of him! A handsome toilet had to be thought of—national vanity was involved.

I was very well pleased with mine. I wore a black velvet gown, stitched *à la Mathilde* with gold and pearls. An open Van Dyck ruff, light tufts of curls, and all my diamonds matched this dignified and severe costume to perfection, a contrast, I must confess, to my then fresh, smiling face. Fashion had not yet sanctified these fanciful costumes; I believe I was one of the first to wear them, and my dresses partook more of the artist than of the fashion journal.

We reached the palace about nine in the evening. We had to traverse a whole army in gilt and galloon, drawn up in line to see the ladies pass. I went behind my mother-in-law, looking right and left to observe the effect my attire would produce on judges both competent and exacting. I admit that I was delighted when, from the midst of flattering whispers, I overheard this exceedingly French remark:

"Ah! How original! You would say a pretty picture stepping out of an old frame. You see nothing of the kind in Paris!"

We were ushered into the great hall, hung with historical paintings, taken to Moscow since by order of the Emperor Nicholas. This hall was as light as day. A number of ladies were already ranged side by side, for, as the selection had been indiscriminate, the company was very large.

We waited rather long, and, if it must be acknowledged, our curiosity was not unmingled with fright. Of a sudden

the silence was broken by a swift rumour, the wings of the door opened noisily, and M. de Talleyrand advanced, with a loud and intelligible voice uttering the magic word that made the world tremble: *The Emperor.* Immediately Napoleon made his appearance, and halted for a minute as if to be admired.

So many portraits exist of this astonishing man, his history has been so much written about, all the stories told by the children of his old soldiers will live so long, that the generations to come will know him almost as well as ourselves. But what will be difficult to grasp is how deep and unexpected the impression was which those felt who saw him for the first time. As for me, I experienced a sort of stupor, a mute surprise, like that which seizes one at the aspect of any prodigy. It seemed to me that he wore an aureole. The only thought I could frame when I had recovered from this first shock was that such a being could not possibly die, that such a mighty organisation, such a stupendous genius, could never perish! I inwardly awarded him *double immortality.*

It is likely—and I want to make no excuses—that the impression he made on me resulted from my youth and the vividness of my imagination. However this may be, I simply relate what I felt.

My mother-in-law was near the door by which the emperor had entered; he addressed himself to her first, and spoke of her husband in flattering terms. My turn came next. I cannot repeat what he said, so upset was I. Probably it was one of the stock phrases that all young women get. I must, no doubt, have answered quite clumsily, for he looked at me with some surprise, which put me still further out of countenance, and drove everything out of my mind except the gracious and gentle smile with which he accompanied the few words he said to me. This smile,

M. DE TALLEYRAND.

From an engraving by Mote after Gérard's portrait.

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which he habitually assumed when speaking to a woman, entirely counteracted his usual stern gaze.

He accomplished the round of the room very quickly. Several of the ladies attempted to broach the subject of the hopes his presence gave rise to, but monosyllables were the only answers to these patriotic flights, somewhat out of place at a presentation, and he disposed of us in less than half an hour. Arrived at the door by which he had entered, he said, rather loudly, to M. de Talleyrand:

"What pretty women!"

Then, turning round once more, he saluted us gracefully with his hand and returned to his apartments.

CHAPTER IV

GALLANTRIES

BALL AT M. DE TALLEYRAND'S—THE GLASS OF LEMONADE —AN IMPERIAL QUADRILLE—MADAME WALEWSKA—THE KEY TO PRINCE MURAT'S APARTMENT.

THE emperor declared that, as there was to be no fighting, he wanted us to enjoy ourselves. The time was propitious, for the carnival had just begun. There was an impediment, however. The *liberators* were occupying all our houses; everywhere the proprietors were reduced, just like ourselves, to a few small rooms, where some sort of crowding in was possible, but where it was out of the question to think of entertaining.

Prince Poniatowski, who alone could have invited a large company to the palace, was hampered by the presence of the emperor. After much discussion, it was decided to give the first ball at M. de Talleyrand's, Grand Chamberlain and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The emperor, as well as all the princes, were to be there. The assurance was given that there would be no more than fifty ladies, but such a severe regulation could not hold out against the thousand and one little intrigues in vogue on similar occasions. It was certainly one of those parties which must not be missed for anything in the world.

Everybody's vanity and curiosity were stretched to the utmost. As for me, I was possessed of the liveliest desire to see the host at close quarters, who was reported to be the most affable and cleverest man of his time. To say the truth, he took little trouble to appear so to us. The intimates asserted that no one joined such dexterity to such brilliancy; but if I were to judge him according to the impression he then made upon me, I should say he was thoroughly satiated and bored with everything—greedy for fame and fortune, jealous of the favours of a master he detested, without either character or principles, and, in a word, as unhealthy in mind as in appearance.

I can scarcely convey the surprise I experienced when I saw him advance laboriously to the middle of the drawing-room, a napkin folded under his arm, a gilt tray in his hand, and offer a glass of lemonade to the monarch whom he in private considered an upstart.

In his youth M. de Talleyrand was said to have counted many successes among the ladies, and I have since seen him in the midst of his old *seraglio*. It was really very comical: all those dames, to whom he had in turn played lover, tyrant, or friend, vainly tried to amuse him. His rudeness defeated all their efforts. He yawned at one, was curt to another, and made fools of them all, maliciously recurring to reminiscences and dates.

To return to the ball. It was one of the most remarkable that it was ever my privilege to attend. The emperor took part in a square dance, which paved the way for his affair with Madame Walewska.

"How do you think I dance?" he asked me, smiling. "I suspect you have been laughing at me."

" In truth, sire," I replied, "for a great man your dancing is perfect."

A little before that Napoleon had seated himself between

the future favourite and myself. After talking for a few minutes he asked me who his other neighbour was. As soon as I had mentioned her name, he turned to her as if no one knew more about her than he.

We learnt afterward that M. de Talleyrand had extended his labours as far as managing this first interview and smoothing the preliminary obstacles. Napoleon, having expressed a wish to count a Pole among his conquests, one of the right kind was chosen—lovely and dull. Some pretended to have noticed that, after the quadrille, the emperor had shaken hands with her, which was equivalent, they said, to an appointment; and it did take place, in fact, the next evening. It was rumoured that a great dignitary had gone to fetch the fair one; quick and undeserved promotion for a good-for-nothing brother was spoken of, and a diamond ornament, which was said to have been refused. People said a great many things they perhaps did not know and invented at pleasure. They even went so far as to assert that Rustan, the Mameluke, had acted as lady's maid! What is certain, however, is that we were all distressed that a person admitted to society had shown such facility, and had defended herself as little as the fortress of Ulm.

But time, which colours everything, gave this connection, so lightly contracted, a tinge of constancy and disinterestedness which partly effaced the irregularity of its origin, and ended in placing Madame Walewska among the notable personages of her period. Exquisitely pretty, she was a realization of Greuze's faces; her eyes, her mouth, and her teeth were beautiful. Her laugh was so fresh, her gaze so soft, her face so seductive, as a whole, that it was never apparent that anything was wanting to the complete regularity of her features.

Married at sixteen to an octogenarian who never appeared in public, in society she had the position of a young

widow. Her extreme youth, combined with such convenient circumstances, gave room to all sorts of surmises, and if Napoleon was her last lover, it was asserted that he had not been the first.

After the emperor had made his choice the princes of the family wanted to follow suit. It was difficult, as there was more than glory involved in this audacious enterprise.

One morning M. Janvier, Prince Murat's private secretary, was announced. He entered, a key in his hand, much embarrassed at his undertaking. Not knowing how to begin, he remained mute, and turned his key over and over without venturing to look at me, whilst I, on my side, racked my brain to guess what he wanted.

In order that this anecdote may be understood, I must say a word about the arrangements of the palace. Between the story occupied by my mother-in-law and the ground floor, where the large apartment was situated which I had surrendered to Prince Murat, there were tiny mezzanine rooms, of which my mother-in-law never made use except in the coldest weather, because they communicated the heat thoroughly by way of a *secret staircase*.

This charming retreat, furnished and decorated in Louis XV. style, was looked upon as a part of the large apartment. The key of it had been given to Prince Murat's servants when he had come to live in our house, and nobody had thought of it since. That was the key M. Janvier had been ordered to bring to me.

Being a man of sense, he felt fully the impropriety of his mission, and was doubly confused when he perceived that I did not understand, and that I persisted in refusing the key as a useless object; because, inhabiting the same floor as my mother-in-law, her private stairs were all that concerned me. Seeing me utterly at a loss, he took the liberty to say, that His Highness, not caring to propose large par-

ties, had thought I might perhaps be pleased to take tea occasionally in these charming nooks. I began to comprehend, and I got angry! He must have read it in my eyes, for I thought he would fall from his chair. He rose, stumbling, and going to a bracket deposited there the miserable key, and made a profound bow, preparatory to his exit.

I could scarce contain myself—indignation inspired me. Smiling as disdainfully as I was able, I begged M. Janvier to tell the prince that my mother-in-law would certainly be sensible to his attention, that at her age large parties were found objectionable, and that she might avail herself of His Highness' obliging offer; that, in any case, since he was leaving the key, I should hand it to my mother-in-law. And, bestowing my haughtiest salute on the poor secretary, who stood petrified by the door, I left the room.

CHAPTER V

THE EMPEROR'S GAME OF WHIST

MORE BALLS—THE PARADE—THE EMPEROR'S ORCHESTRA—THE DUTCH DEPUTATION—THE STAKE AT CARDS—THE HEIR PRESUMPTIVE OF BAVARIA—THE "COUNT OF COMMINGES"—THE PRINCES OF THE BLOOD—MURAT'S GASCON ACCENT—HIS AFFECTED PHRASES.

M. DE TALLEYRAND'S ball was followed by two others: one given by Prince Borghese, the other by Prince Murat. I was indisposed, and did not attend the first; it was my mother-in-law's opinion that I ought to be at the second, so as to sustain the part I had adopted towards M. Janvier, and not in any way change the relationship of frigid politeness existing between our guest and ourselves.

The weather continuing to render the roads impassable, the emperor did not leave town, and his regular outings were limited to the parade which took place in Saxon Square. Although this was an almost daily drill, people flocked there in crowds whenever Napoleon showed himself. He was accompanied back to the palace with spontaneous shouts and hurrahs, which showed him how his fame and our hopes had endeared him to the nation. He did not seem in the least put out by these demonstrations, although sometimes the enthusiasm resulted in blocking his way.

Besides the balls, there was a court reception once a week. The evening began with a splendid concert and ended with a game of whist. There was never any dancing at the palace.

The emperor had a complete orchestra in his train, under the direction of the celebrated composer Paër. It was always Italian music. Napoleon seemed to be passionately devoted to it. He listened attentively, applauded with discrimination, and the sounds of harmony appeared to seize strongly upon his moral faculties. A proof was given us at one of the entertainments.

He had just received information that General Victor, the bearer of a despatch of the highest importance, had allowed the Prussians to catch him! This piece of news put him beside himself. If not a case of treason—so it was noised about—it was at least one of unpardonable carelessness. Now, that very day a Dutch deputation, come to congratulate the emperor upon his victory at Jena, was to be admitted to audience immediately before the reception. It was near ten o'clock, we had been waiting a long time, and were beginning to suspect something extraordinary might be happening, when, the door being noisily thrown open, we saw the fat Dutchmen, in their scarlet clothes, roll rather than walk in. The emperor was prodding them, exclaiming in somewhat loud tones: "Go on! Go on!"

No doubt a number of people had accumulated at the door the moment that Napoleon made his appearance, for he walked very quickly, as was his habit. The poor envoys lost their heads, and tumbled all over each other.

At any other time this comical scene would have raised a laugh, but the master's voice and the expression of his face were not reassuring, and, to say truth, we should have preferred not to witness this episode. We were wrong. The music soothed the emperor quickly; towards the end of the

concert he resumed his gracious smile, addressing pleasant words to the ladies he liked best, before sitting down to his whist table. The emperor always named the ladies in the morning who were to play with him in the evening. His choice habitually fell upon one of the oldest and two of the youngest. I was taught to play an indifferent game, and the first time the coveted distinction was mine I let slip a too hasty answer, which was apparently not taken amiss, seeing that from that day I was a fixture at the card table.

At the moment when the cards were drawn, Napoleon, turning in my direction, inquired:

"What shall the stake be?"

"Oh, sire," I answered, "some town, some province, some kingdom!"

He laughed.

"And supposing you should lose?" he asked, with a particularly sly look.

"Your Majesty is in funds, and will perhaps deign to pay for me."

This speech won me favour which was never withdrawn. Whether in Poland or in Paris, Napoleon never failed to accord me a distinguished welcome, and to treat me with endless consideration.

It was remarked that Madame Walewska never played cards, and this regard for propriety was universally commended.

A really funny thing it was to see all the little German princes, who, under various pretexts remaining at headquarters, danced attendance at the emperor's game of cards. Among others there was the heir presumptive to the throne of Bavaria, who respectfully kissed Napoleon's hand whenever he managed to *get it*. But he had the impudence to be in love with Madame Walewska! Napoleon's peace was not in the least disturbed by this rivalry, which was even

supposed to amuse him. The prince, much maltreated by nature, was, besides, deaf and a stutterer.

The foreign ministers apart and some of the high functionaries settled down at play, no one sat down in the emperor's presence, not even his brothers-in-law. This did not seem to displease Prince Murat, who did not lose the opportunity to pose, and to strike attitudes which he judged appropriate to show off the beauty of his figure. But little Borghese was enraged, and still had not the courage to sit down.

After cards came supper. Napoleon never took a seat at table, but walked about, so as to chat with the ladies, diverting himself with asking a thousand questions, which sometimes were embarrassing, considering the extremely precise answers he exacted. He wanted to know what you did, what you read, what you thought about most, what you liked best.

One day, or one evening rather, when, leaning on the back of my chair, he amused himself with examining me in this way as to my reading, he talked novels, and told me that of all which had come into his hands, the "Comte de Comminges" had interested him by far the most. He had read it twice, and each time had been moved to tears.

I did not know the book, and it may well be imagined that, no sooner had I reached home, I ransacked my father-in-law's library. Unfortunately, this novel was not there. Only a long time after that conversation did I succeed in getting a copy, and I too shed tears!

My mother-in-law, being the only lady of Warsaw who had kept up a *salon*, found herself obliged to give drawing-room teas and dances. A host of strangers who had come with the diplomatic body asked nothing better than to be entertained. The *princes*, of the *blood* so-called, missed none of these parties, without, however, compromising their dignity, for they only danced at *court balls!*

Prince Murat, little discountenanced by the failure of his absurd enterprise, seized this opportunity to talk to me, and overwhelmed me with insipid compliments. I scarcely made an effort to prevent his seeing how he wearied me. He finally, though somewhat late, did perceive it. Then, assuming a melodramatic air, he said this very ridiculous phrase—rendered more so by his Gascon accent—which has made my friends laugh so much:

"*Madame Alexandre!* you are not ambitious; you do not care for princes!"

At Paris I heard a companion anecdote. The day that Murat was proclaimed King of Naples, a fair one, touched by his greatness, accorded him a private interview. As the cares of his empire were not yet taking up much of his time, he arrived too early, and, impatient of waiting, he carried his hand to his forehead, exclaiming:

"Was an unhappier monarch ever known?"

When I reflect how petty and absurd all those princes of Napoleon's family seemed to us by the side of the colossus who overshadowed them, I repeat the maxim proved true by the ages, that in the eyes of mankind only a great character or great deeds can justify sudden elevation.

CHAPTER VI

EYLAU

THE PINK RELIC—MARET, DUKE DE BASSANO—THE DUKE DE DALBERG—BIRTH OF NATHALIA POTOCKA—MADAME WALEWSKA AT OSTERADE—JOSÉPHINE'S SHAWL—NAPOLEON'S OPINION OF "CORINNE"—BATTLE OF EYLAU—THE RETURN OF THE FRENCH—FEAT OF ARMS BY PRINCE BORGHESE.

War was no longer the topic. Many people even believed the emperor was waiting for the spring to resume hostilities. But, as rapid in his resolves as in his actions, he suddenly left on the 5th of February, and the army got orders to move.

A farewell is a dangerous rock! It is then hard not to betray a sentiment one is continually repressing. Fortunately I was not alone!

Charles wrote to me on the pretext of commending to my care a pocketbook which he did not like to expose to the chances of war. It contained the letters of a mother he dearly loved, and who wrote with a particular grace. He begged me, in conclusion, not to refuse him, as a token of sacred friendship, a relic (supposed to have the virtue of warding off bullets), a pink ribbon which I had worn the day before. This idea silenced my scruples: I surrendered

the pink ribbon! People who are going to war have the right to ask so much! He made me promise to write sometimes. He requested permission to keep me informed of the progress of an army that was to fight for our cause.

I submitted this request to my husband; as he found nothing to object, I promised, and he went.

I have not yet spoken of Maret, the Duke de Bassano, minister and secretary of state; he was one of those who rarely left the emperor. This time, however, he was to await events.

Arrived at great station, he was perhaps the only man of this period of speedy fortunes who had kept nothing of the rank he had started from, yet without any way abusing that which he had obtained. His manners, his dress, his conversation, all, excepting his enormous calves, belonged to a person of good society. If his mind was less versatile and subtle than M. de Talleyrand's, his perfect tact, joined to rare good judgment, came to his aid, and rendered him fit to cope with the ablest. An upright and honest man moreover, he had earned the right to hold his head up.

His affairs were related to my father-in-law's, so that we saw him often. After working a long time, he would come into the room to chat with us for a moment; he called these short intervals his recreation. His politeness was of the kind that comes from the heart; he never missed an opportunity of being obliging. He was accused of being amenable to flattery, and of having bestowed his confidence on persons little worthy of it. It is possible—true kindness has this drawback, that it is easy to abuse it.

I must not forget, in speaking of our friends, the cleverest of them all, the Duke de Dalberg.

He was the last scion of that ancient family to which history has allotted so conspicuous a place. At the moment of a German emperor's anointing a herald was charged

with exclaiming: *Ist ein Dalberg da?* If the answer was in the negative, the ceremony was invalid.

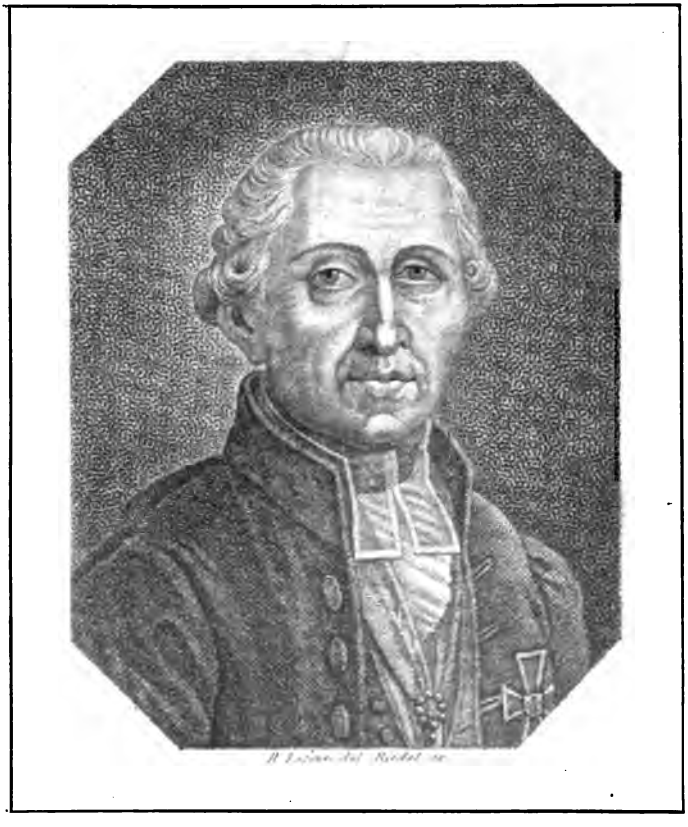
Upon his return to France the duke married a Mademoiselle de Brignole, by whom he had but one daughter, who died quite young. During his sojourn in Poland he entertained a deep passion for one who could neither appreciate nor understand him, nature having denied the duke the gifts that are seductive to a stupid person. In this matter he showed himself as extravagant as a German and as delicate as a Frenchman. I listened to his confidences patiently, for he put all the charm of his mind into them. He was a singular personage, half seer, half eighteenth-century philosopher; he had connections with all the most enlightened and the most compromised people in Europe. Violently imprudent, he said anything that came into his head, sparing no one, not even Napoleon, whom he called a *tyrant* and an *usurper*. His real mission was to watch the interests of Germany, which he somewhat neglected when love claimed all his faculties.

Admitted to the intimacy of M. de Talleyrand, he would often groan with him over the current events! And still he pronounced sincere hopes for the restoration of Poland, while also ardently wishing for the emancipation of Germany—two things as hard to reconcile as the rest of his sentiments.

And what proved that Napoleon was not so bad as the duke made him out was that Dalberg was never interfered with; one could scarcely admit, though, that his way of thinking was unknown to the emperor.

. . . . . .

On the eighteenth of March, 1807, my sweet little daughter was born. She sealed all our hopes. The child, six years old at this time of writing, was lovely from the day of her birth. Her little features had all the regularity of an



CARL THEODOR, DUKE DE DALBERG.

From a German engraving.

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antique bust; certainly Helen of Troy was no more beautiful when she was born. She continues to develop those classic lines of feature which I attribute to my devotion to the arts. I was always in the midst of the finest models; I dwelt rapturously upon the splendid paintings at my father-in-law's, and it is not surprising if my child was the reflex, as it were, of my constant occupation. My mother became her godmother, and I called her Nathalia; the name pleased me, and was well adapted to her little Greek face.

I do not know how I came to have forgotten the mention of my son's baptism, which was celebrated with all the magnificence reserved for boys, and especially for the oldest son. Prince Joseph Poniatowski and Marshal Potocki, my father-in-law's brother, were his godfathers; the beautiful Countess Zamoyska and Countess Tyszkiewicz, Prince Poniatowski's sister, his godmothers. Prince Joseph made my son a magnificent present, which we preserve reverently, and which, I hope, will never leave the family. It is the sword of Sigismund I., and was used at the anointing of our kings. There being no lustre attached to the lot of women, their destiny seems different from the cradle. Nathalia was baptised in my room, without pomp or ceremony. If, some day, she should resent this, let her think of the joy her birth gave me, and the admiration her beauty already called forth.

. . . . . .

The emperor, having established his headquarters at Osterode, sent for the Duke de Bassano, and, a few days after, for M. de Talleyrand. The diplomatic body, including a Turkish and a Persian ambassador, was left us. People went to see these Orientals eat, smoke, and say their prayers; it was a sort of performance, and there was a long file at their doors.

News from headquarters was quite frequent, as might

be imagined. The enemy retired, so as to concentrate his forces the better. The emperor, sure of victory, was not disturbed by this, and seemed to be waiting to be attacked. The weather being still very severe, Napoleon, having a good deal of time on his hands, sent for Madame Walewska. The fair one's brother, who had suddenly advanced from lieutenant to colonel, hastened to bring her, with a show of mystery, to headquarters. Some secrets cannot possibly be kept when so many idle witnesses strive to satisfy their curiosity so as to be able to tell everything. Thus it soon became known that a carriage, with the blinds carefully lowered, had made its appearance at night. The rest could be guessed. The only thing that remained concealed was the place where the traveller had been deposited.

While Madame Walewska was at Osterode, the Persian ambassador sent the presents to be accepted from his master. Among other splendours were a number of shawls intended for the Empress Joséphine. Her unfaithful spouse wanted to abstract some; he even insisted repeatedly that his mistress should choose the finest. But in vain. She persisted in refusing, and as he was offended at the stubbornness of her refusal, she finally took a blue shawl—the simplest and least valuable of them all—saying she had a friend who liked blue, and that on her return she would offer her the shawl.

Napoleon liked this disinterestedness.

"Your men are brave and devoted," said he, with a gracious smile, "and the women pretty and disinterested. That makes a fine nation. I promise you to set Poland up again, sooner or later."

And as she fell on her knees and thanked him effusively, he exclaimed:

"Ah! ah! that present—you would accept it without further ado! But wait; a political move is not like winning a battle; it is not so easy, and takes more time."

Galerie Napoléon.

(PRINCE JOSEPH PONIATOWSKI.)

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As soon as hostilities began Napoleon sent Madame Walewska away. She went as she had come. Her brother took her back to the country, and mystery again presided over her journey. It seems that the emperor was convinced that no one was aware of what had been happening.

The novel "Corinne" had just appeared; as it created a sensation, it was sent to headquarters from Paris. It arrived in the night with a heap of despatches, which were at once remitted to the emperor.

After running through the most important of these missives Napoleon looked at the novel, and had M. de Talleyrand awakened, so that he might read it to him.

"You like this woman," said he; "let us see if she has common sense."

After listening for half an hour he became impatient.

"That is not sentiment; it is a hash of phrases—a head front-side back. Don't you see she thinks she loves this Englishman because he shows himself cold and indifferent? Go to bed—it's time wasted. Whenever an author personifies herself in a book it is a failure. Good-night."

The next day he gave "Corinne" to the Duke of Bassano, who sent it to me, thinking we had not yet received the book at Warsaw.

I have religiously kept this historical copy.

A few days after my confinement a messenger brought the news of the battle of Eylau, and a *Te Deum* was sung, although thirty thousand men were lost. At Saint Petersburg there was also rejoicing, and thanks were offered up to Providence for having allowed the field of battle to be long and cruelly fought over. They called that a victory!

I soon received a letter that reassured me as to the fate of those in whom I was interested. It contained more questions about my health than details of the battle. He only said that the engagement had been bloody, that the enemy had offered strong resistance, and that it meant especial

good luck to have escaped the quantity of balls and bullets fired off during the many hours the battle had lasted. This especial good luck he put to the account of the pink ribbon, to which he attributed the virtue of a preservative against all danger. He even advised me to make my daughter wear this colour, in preference to any other, as it was proved that it brought good fortune; but Nathalia's colour was and remained blue.

During the short truce which followed the battle of Eylau a number of officers arrived from headquarters. Under various pretexts these gentlemen came to rest a little and see the objects of their affection, for nearly all had made their choice; and I am unfortunately constrained to say that few of them met with cruelty. Nevertheless those ladies who showed some inspired the most durable and chivalrous sentiments; there were even marriages, only few; the Frenchmen of that day scarcely had time to set up households.

Among our returning friends was Prince Borghese, all triumphant from his military achievements. As he was only a colonel, and the emperor wanted to promote him with some show of justice, his regiment was sent into a little skirmish where more glory was to be won than real danger to be incurred. The colonel was very proud of having drawn his sword for the first time, and said very seriously to M. de Vaugiron, whom he met at my house:

"Why don't you tell the countess how I drew the *sciabola?*"

This grand feat of arms was reported in the despatches, and described in a pompous manner, and very soon after the campaign His Imperial Highness, in compensation of his services and valour, was awarded the government of Turin, where he recovered, for the rest of his earthly term, from the fatigues of war, without any other cares than the frequent and *just* uneasiness the princess, his wife, caused him.

BATTLE OF EYLAU, FEBRUARY 7, 1807.
(Attack on the Cemetery.)
From an engraving by Skellon of the painting by Siméon Fort.

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CHAPTER VII

TILSIT

PRESENTATION OF THE COLOURS TO THE THREE POLISH LEGIONS—PRINCE PONIATOWSKI—VICTORY OF FRIEDLAND—COUNT STANISLAUS POTOCKI AT THE INTERVIEW OF TILSIT—THE TEARS OF THE QUEEN OF PRUSSIA—THE ROYAL BANQUET—THE DUCHY OF WARSAW.

So much ardour and zeal had been spent upon the organisation of the army that it was ready to move soon after Napoleon's entry into Warsaw. The third of May, 1807, the three legions, thus created by a stroke of the magician's wand and popular enthusiasm, were given their eagles and their standards. I have since witnessed many ceremonies, have been present at the most gorgeous festivities. I have participated in the joy of triumphs, and gazed with rapture on more than one apotheosis. But nothing has ever left so deep an impression upon me as this high function.

About a plain altar, erected in the middle of the square, this young and splendid company was crowding, reverently taking part in the mass celebrated by the archbishop. Nothing is so grand and imposing as a patriotic manifestation mingled with religion and the love of glory.

At the moment of the benediction, the standards were brought to the great dignitaries, who, according to an ancient custom, were to drive a nail into them. Prince Ponia-

towski, as General-in-Chief, presided at this ceremony. Never did a nobler figure more grandly express lustre of birth, bravery, and big-heartedness. Nor can words describe the effect he produced when, entrusting these fine troops with their new colours, he made them an oration, appealing to the sentiments of honour he himself represented.

The prince did not wish the ladies to refrain from a ceremony which was laying up for them such cruel anxieties and bitter sorrows. The whole youth of the country had flown to arms, and not a mother, not a wife or sister but who trembled for one of her own. In turn we had the honour of driving a nail into these standards we had stitched.

The war continuing, we awaited immediate marching orders for the Polish army. Many hearts beat at this expectation! Some with hope and the others with fear; while the children could not contain their joy, the mothers went into despair.

The seventeenth of June a messenger, despatched in the usual way from the battlefield, brought the news of the victory of Friedland, which resulted in peace. The emperor had gone to Tilsit to negotiate and to fix the conditions upon which he would consent to sign the treaty.

I shall say little of the celebrated interview. But from my father-in-law, Count Stanislaus Potocki, I have some curious and scarcely known details. The count had been called to Tilsit, under Napoleon's eyes to draw up the suitable or *indispensable* amendments to the constitution of the third of May, which he wanted to give us back with *slightly* imperial touches. Many people believed that the publicity Napoleon affected to draw upon this performance constituted a sort of scarecrow, intended to strike the imagination of the Emperor Alexander, to whom Napoleon always pointed out Poland as a menacing spectre which, sooner or later, must shake off its shroud and claim its rights.

NAPOLEON AND ALEXANDER OF RUSSIA MEETING
ON THE NIEMEN AT TILSIT.

From engravings by Couché fils.

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The meeting at Tilsit was certainly one of the most brilliant moments of the imperial reign. The King and Queen of Prussia came thither as suppliants. To Alexander they owed the preservation of their kingdom, about to be effaced from the list of the nations, which we were hoping for with all our souls.

The lovely queen seemed to attempt falling on her knees; Napoleon politely offered his hand, and conducted her to her apartments.

The two monarchs who escorted her remained silent. The queen, after whispering an appeal to the victor's magnanimity, had recourse to tears. Napoleon appeared moved by these demonstrations of humility and grief; he could not, however, restrain himself from avowing to the august lady that he had felt the effects of her *impotent* hate, and, enveloping the reproach in terms of highest courtesy, said that at her sight he no longer wondered at the number of enemies she had enlisted against him and at the tenacity of Germany's resistance. Alexander, perceiving the necessity of changing the current of a conversation that was becoming dangerous, observed, with that subtlety which was one of the remarkable traits of his character, that all efforts had remained fruitless because of the genius of him against whom they had been directed, and modestly confessed that to try to oppose him one must not know him.

Thus ended the first interview, which was followed by a royal banquet. For this occasion the queen doffed her mourning and resumed the crown and purple, which she wore with a rare dignity. The emperor led the queen to table, and seated her at his right hand. Adding to her cleverness the faculty of mingling in the most important concerns, she contrived to find favour before the man who held the fate of Prussia in his hand.

At the farewell hour Napoleon, won over by the insinuating ways of Alexander—whom he called the handsomest

and subtlest of Greeks—and also by the *repentant* beauty of the Queen of Prussia, made her a gift of Silesia, with *one stroke* of his pen cancelling the article of the treaty by which this province was already taken from Prussia, a piece of liberality on the conqueror's part which M. de Talleyrand was far from approving.

As for the King of Prussia, his nullity made him dumb. He had made war to satisfy the queen's ambitious desires; he made peace, happy to take up his gentle habits again without much calculation of what he might have lost or of what he might have won.

From all these negotiations there resulted for us but the creation of the modest Duchy of Warsaw. It was less than our aspirations and endeavours presaged. But we thought of the future in order to endure the present.

NAPOLEON RECEIVING THE QUEEN OF PRUSSIA AT TILSIT, JULY 6, 1807.

From an engraving by Danois of the painting by Gosse.

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CHAPTER VIII

MARSHAL DAVOUT

MARSHAL DAVOUT, GOVERNOR OF WARSAW—HIS WIFE—GENERAL RICARD—PRINCE MURAT AND HIS LIVERY—DEPARTURE OF M. DE F——T—HIS LETTER—DEATH OF MADAME DE CRACOVIE, 1808.

THE emperor returned to France, to enjoy the intoxication which this short and brilliant Prussian campaign had caused. We were not yet tired of victory. Marshal Davout was left us, who took command of the town and exercised such political influence as his rather limited means permitted. Taken on the whole, he was one of the best men in the army. It may be presumed that Napoleon, knowing his marshals to the core, appointed this one because he was sure of his devotion, as well as of his morality. He did not wish to surrender to pillage a country which he might afterwards use as a strong barrier against his enemies. He had become but too well acquainted, during this short space of time, with the enormous resources he would find in a nation always disposed to the most strenuous efforts (and to the greatest sacrifices, so long as the recovery of independence was in view) not to reserve this powerful lever, in case of need.

So the marshal had orders to treat us considerately, to flatter and amuse us. He sent for his wife, so as to keep house on a grand scale, and as a subsidy received the Grand Duchy of Lowicz.

The lady marshal, a woman of severe beauty, was a worthy person. Brought up at Madame de Campan's, she had acquired distinguished manners there, and also the tone of good society, in which her husband was deficient; but she did not make herself beloved, as she was none too agreeable. She was said to be possessed with the perpetual jealousy that the marshal's fugitive loves aroused in her; he, like all the Frenchmen, raved over the Polish women, and seemed ill convenienced by the presence of his wife, and he had, besides, a Frenchwoman who was supposed to be his wife's image, and who, thanks to these legitimate externals, had followed the army, to the emperor's profound displeasure.

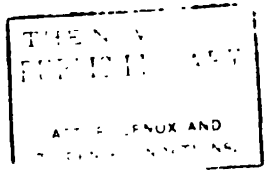
All these circumstances combined had the effect of making the duchess indifferent to rendering her house a pleasant resort, and of her husband going to seek distraction elsewhere.

The marshal's staff did not abound with prominent individuals. M. Anatole de Montesquiou, then very young, was the only one we were glad to see; his education corresponded to his name.

Among the generals with this army only one was really a man of note, and I am still surprised that he was not spoken of more, his superiority being incontestable. Once a friend and companion to Napoleon, General Ricard had fallen into disgrace because he vowed fidelity to Moreau, under whom he had served and for whom he professed a lively admiration. He took no pains to conceal his feelings at a time when Moreau was deserted by every one. This noble and courageous integrity by no means prevented his

GENERAL RICARD.

From an engraving by Forestier.



paying loud tribute to the genius and high talents of Napoleon, whom he perhaps respected less as an emperor than he had respected him as a commander-in-chief when Bonaparte, after subduing Italy, astonished the world by his precocious ability.

General Ricard eclipsed his comrades, yet there were pleasant people among them. The French of those days were passionately fond of amusement, and did everything with spirit. There were plays, there was dancing; sleighing parties were organised. We might well take advantage of this moment's respite; under Napoleon peace was never but a short truce to be employed in resting and recuperating, so as to be all the fresher at the first call. Not all were equally well bestowed; many passed their winter sadly in their cantonments at the end of Silesia. M. de F—— was one of these. Prince Murat having proposed to make his adjutants wear the colours of his livery in the shape of a fantastic uniform, M. de F—— incurred his wrath by joining those who refused to wear the livery; he preferred to be sent back to his regiment while the prince returned to Paris, his brow bedecked with laurels and all ready to receive the crown.

The rebel wrote me and related his mishap. He declared that he did not at all wish to return to Paris, and that he would apply to Marshal Davout for leave to spend some time at Warsaw. In case the marshal should refuse, M. de F—— had decided to take the journey secretly, if, however, he said, the only authority to which he submitted without appeal would vouchsafe not to forbid, and if he was sure not to displease those whom he wished to see.

This letter disquieted me. I had made honest endeavours to chase away from my memory so dangerous an image; I saw it arise anew and threatening. My friend Madame Sobolewska happily interposed. I showed her the letter,

pretending not to take to myself the sub-meanings it conveyed. I ascribed M. de F——'s journey to the very natural desire for a little distraction and amusement. I most vigorously espoused the defence of one whom nobody was attacking.

My friend let me talk, and took care not to contradict me; but when she saw I was calmer she looked at me fixedly, and, calling upon my candour, merely asked me if I really had the least doubt as to the object of this journey. She added that did I give my consent, I acquiesced in defeat beforehand.

I answered the insinuating letter with pleasantries, and succeeded so well that I removed any notion of increased intimacy. A few months later M. de F—— was recalled to Paris through the offices of a person in very high station, who had long been enamoured of him without his knowledge.

A courier sent by my mother from Bialystok quickly turned my thoughts into a different channel. The announcement was that Madame de Cracovie, being very sick, had expressed her wish to see us, to give us her blessing once more. We left at once. I find among my papers the fragment of a journal I wrote in 1808, at a period when I had not yet thought of narrating my memories. I copy faithfully from the journal.

. . . . . .

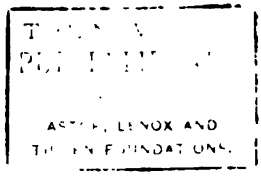
Bialystok, February 9, 1808.—Here I am in this castle, where I spent so many happy and tranquil years. At every step I pick up a reminiscence and experience a regret. The sensation is at once sweet and painful—all has passed away, all must pass away!

I see that dearest aunt again; they are trembling for her life. I have encountered death for the first time. That room, so sad and dark, those sobs suppressed, and that

Frédéric Guillaume III,
Roi de Prusse, né le 3. Août 1770;
et Louise Augustine Wilhelmine Amélie
de Mecklenbourg-Strelitz,
Reine de Prusse, née le 10 Mars 1776.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF PRUSSIA.

From a rare print.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mute despair have made a mark upon my mind that nothing can wash away.

Poor little Amelia de Bassompierre is weeping hot tears, and she is right—she loved her so much! The rest of the family is only *behaving with propriety.*

The 10th, Morning.—I have not been able to shut an eye —and to-morrow I shall perhaps bewail this night that has seemed so long! She is still alive, at least!

This morning they prepared her to receive me. The news of our arrival had apparently revived her. Towards noon the doctor came for us. Heavens! how could I go to her so courageously, smile in talking to her, and not break into tears when she gave me her hand to kiss. *I have not the strength to tell you how well I love you,* she said to me in a voice that was rather broken than faint. Then she spoke of my poor little children, whom I have not thought of these two days. My husband not drawing near, she did not notice him on account of the darkness which reigned in this great chamber stretched with red gold-laced damask. She told me to bring him, and, though she seemed tired, after collecting herself for a moment, pressed his hand, saying in fairly firm tones:

"I commend to you all that is dear to me in this world—your wife and her mother. Always watch over their happiness."

She signed to us to go, but directly called me back, and said, with that look of ineffable, saintly goodness peculiar to her in her sickness:

"Send your mother away; take her away, I beseech you! What a sight for her!"

And when I sought to quiet her by explaining that we would not depart before she was completely restored, she shook her head—a beatific smile flitted across her face, and, giving me her hand, she added:

"You cannot conceive what good you are doing me; you give me back my peace, and since you have decided, stay a few days more—it will not be long. Now I shall die easy—I was so distressed about your poor mother!"

Seeing her perfectly calm, I tried to talk to her of various things I thought likely to interest her. She listened to me attentively.

I am in her room all day, or in the adjoining closet. I weep no more, and I even am accustoming myself to this mournful spectacle; there is a sort of sweetness attaching to the care you bestow on one beloved, and which silences every other feeling. I shall be with her until the end. This pure soul will give mine the certainty which I so sorely need.

She has said her prayers and received the sacrament. I could not bear the formalities of the ceremony. But she—how calmly she prepared for it! You would have said a feast that she was impatiently awaiting. She does not regret her life at all, and yet at times it looks as though she feared death physically, and recoiled before the idea of destruction. So it is very hard to die!

The 12th, Evening.—Should it be possible to become used to everything? I feel neither so sorrowful nor so downcast as before; perhaps hope has glided into my heart. It is impossible to imagine the thought of losing those who are dear to us, and it is enough to know the danger diminishing a little to believe it over.

She has had a passable night, and has taken a little nourishment. Nevertheless, the doctor disheartens me; he finds her very bad still. But they say that doctors are often mistaken. She is interested in everything that is said. Heavens! how happy it makes me to see her smile! This is perhaps a time of which I shall cherish the dearest memories. I feel beloved and useful. That is a consolation for

living. I said *consolation!* Not that I am tired of existence, but that I do not understand how one can set any value upon it otherwise than by feeling one's self *necessary* to the happiness of others.

The 13th, Noon.—She is very ill! The night was fearful; she is weakening visibly, and now only speaks when it cannot possibly be avoided; but she is quite conscious, and recognises everybody.

The post has not come: I have no news of my children. At any other time I should be alarmed and disconsolate, for my mother-in-law had promised to send word by every post. To-day I must not think of all that endears life to me, in that room where everything breathes death, dissolution, eternity.

When I am in her chamber and hear the old clock strike, I involuntarily shudder at the thought of its soon ringing the fatal hour.

Midnight.—There is no more hope. She has been in horrible agony for two or three hours. She could find no place to lay her head. From time to time she asked if the night was bright, and if many stars were out. When I approached to kiss her hand I found it quite cold. I took it very gently to put it to my forehead. I believe she understood, and blessed me; then she told me not to go away and not to speak to her. I think she was praying.

It is cruel to see her suffer so—is that the death of the righteous? Now she is asleep, and the doctor asserts she will live till to-morrow. O God, what a terrible night!

The 14th.—All is over! She expired about two o'clock. Her end was as gentle as her life, and her face kept that expression of kindness which made her so dear to us. A few minutes before her death she spoke again. The fire was crackling; she requested that no more wood be put on, wishing for absolute silence and peace.

Perceiving that one of her maids was weeping, she gave her her handkerchief, motioning to her not to speak. Very often she asked whether the night was fine—the poor saint was thinking of her journey. She seemed in haste to quit the earth, and at every moment asked the hour. About two o'clock she fell peacefully asleep, and never woke again!

The doctor having declared to my mother that the patient was not near her end, we retired to take a little rest. At four o'clock I was awakened by the sound of bells; I trembled, but did not dare to ask questions. I ran to my mother—our tears told us what we were afraid to ask one another.

The 17th.—We leave to-morrow. So I shall never see this room again where I am writing, and in which I lived during the happiest years of my life. I, also, perhaps have lived half of my life. It will come to me, that redoubtable moment! But she will help me, she will watch over me! May my life be worthy of such protection!

The 20th, Warsaw.—Here I am again. Sometimes it seems as though I had been through a hideous dream. The dream has broken my heart; it has robbed life of its charm. I shun the world; my children only are bearable to me.

Note.—After a few years M. de Cracovie's heirs, who owned Bialystok, sold that magnificent property to the Emperor Alexander, who had the castle kept in good order, and counted this splendid habitation among the imperial residences.

The Emperor Nicholas, careless of historical memories, transformed the castle into a boarding school, and had the superb orange trees taken to Saint Petersburg. A large portion of the oldest trees perished in the long transit.

Part the Third

JOURNEY TO FRANCE IN 1810

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARIES OF MARIE-LOUISE'S MARRIAGE

DEATH OF THE WRITER'S FATHER, COUNT TYSZKIEWICZ—DEPARTURE FOR VIENNA — VIENNESE SOCIETY—THE PRINCE DE LIGNE—HIS MARRIAGE—COUNT CHARLES DE DAMAS—COUNTESS PALFFY—NEWS FROM PARIS—RECRIMINATIONS OF THE VIENNESE ARISTOCRACY—ARRIVAL OF BERTHIER—LETTER FROM NAPOLEON TO THE ARCHDUKE CHARLES.

THOSE who write their memoirs usually treat their readers with insufficient frankness. They nearly all prune their reminiscences, and set them down according to their sweet will. Right or wrong, I have left mine all their imperfections, and I have refrained from deadening the colour of their day. In a word, I have not made them over. The distinct shades that the years lend our impressions will be found in them. Everything, to the difference in the writing, bears witness to the veracity of these pages.

It is here that the first blank will be detected.

Engrossed by the sorrow that the news of my father's sudden illness caused me, I left all other interests out of sight, and at once determined to request a passport to Wilna. The odious delays of the Russian government deprived me

of the consolation of finding my father alive, and of at least receiving his last blessing. I arrived too late.

I returned to Warsaw, but my mother was there no longer. Since Madame de Cracovie's death she had settled in Vienna. Not wishing to be presented at court, she had afterwards taken up her residence at Baden, proposing to live there unknown. Her only society was a Swiss family, to whom she had become attached.

In the very middle of a rather stiff winter my good mother invited us to visit her at Baden. After a month, imagining that we were making too great a sacrifice in renouncing the pleasures of the capital, she persuaded us to go to Vienna to pass the rest of the winter. She promised soon to join us there. My husband too was beginning to tire of the monotony of our life, and I gladly acceded to my mother's suggestion.

The de Ligne house was then the centre where all prominent strangers gathered, and to which an introduction was the object of eager solicitation. Taken in with especial kindness and thoughtfulness, I found it a more amusing resort than any other. That modest little saloon, whither straw-bottomed chairs were fetched from the hall when there were too few; that frugal supper, where the conversation was the dominating charm; that delightful good nature—all that is well worth dwelling on with affection, and it would be ungrateful to pass over it.

The famous Prince de Ligne was, at more than seventy, still one of the wittiest and brilliant talkers of his circle—far more remarkable by his conversation than by his works. Indulgent, easy-going, and kind, he was adored by his children, and loved them because they were lovable, ascribing no importance to anything but the amenities of existence, for he believed in good faith that he had been put into the world for the sole purpose of enjoying himself. If he

PRINCE DE LIGNE.

From an engraving by Cazenave.

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had been seen in the pursuit of fame in his youth, it was because fame promised him fresh amatory triumphs, and because one is sometimes the more acceptable for being able to write a love letter on a laurel leaf. The owner of a considerable fortune, which, like his life, he had squandered in all possible ways, he endured the penury to which his prodigalities had condemned him with stoical good humour. His humble straw-bottomed chairs, his leg of mutton, his immortal piece of cheese, gave room to a thousand witty and welcome jokes. You would have said he had gained in mirth what he had lost in fortune, and that, like the sage of old who threw his treasure into the sea to achieve happiness, he had wanted to be poor.

The princess had none of the requisites for being so philosophical; husband and wife seemed to speak different languages, and never to have told each other anything.

The princess was issued from one of the highest families of Germany; but she was poor, as all the titled girls of that country are, and as fully devoid of charm and brain. It was impossible to understand what had moved the prince to this match, inasmuch as he did not approve of German alliances. His old friends repeated a jest he let out when for the first time he took his young wife to Brussels, where his regiment was garrisoned. This jest depicted his roguish wit and his extreme frivolity at the same time. The officers having assembled to be presented to the princess, he said to them:

"I am most sensible, gentlemen, to your amiable assiduity; you shall see her; I warn you, alas! that she is not at all pretty, but, being at any rate very good and very simple, she will be in nobody's way, not *even in mine!*"

Being, at the time I speak of, already far advanced in years, she easily gave way to ill temper, but that was taken no notice of; her acquaintances would then leave her to her

needlework, and, while she was doing the most atrocious embroidering, would form in groups about the prince and his daughters, with whom conversation was carried on in a spirit of enthusiasm and freedom, with a taste and grace I have never encountered elsewhere. By the report of old-time French people, the conversation of the Paris saloons had taken refuge in this humble little dwelling since the Revolution had banished it from the purlieus of the capital, where it had formerly flourished. I certainly never met so agreeable a society in Paris; there the politest pleasures were spoilt by political partisanship. Among the foremost frequenters of the de Ligne establishment I will mention Count Charles de Damas, who, obstinate in his emigration, *persistently* awaited the return of the Bourbons. Settled in Vienna for many years, he had but once absented himself, during what he called the *invasion of the blues.*

No sooner was the town evacuated than he came back to stay, as in the past, with his old friends; but not without reluctance did he forgive the Prince de Ligne for having admitted his *strayed countrymen*, as he called all those who had subscribed to the new government. Very clever, but subject to the queerest freaks, all his extravagances were overlooked because of his fine character and extreme originality. I have heard him employ all his eloquence in proving that it is sometimes permissible to show *bad behaviour* on condition of never showing *bad taste*, and hence he believed in his right to say anything.

We thought we should die of laughter one day when he related, in the most serious fashion in the world, how the second of the Prince de Ligne's daughters, Countess Palffy, an angel of virtue and purity, had induced him to make *evil acquaintances*, by pointing out the abode of the most famous "nymphs," in order, he said, to save the reputation of the respectable women he might pay his addresses to. Now, with a chin of which he had left half at the siege of

Belgrade, and his fifty years, the poor hero offered sufficient guarantees of safety.

Independently of the de Lignes, we spent our time profitably with some of our compatriots. One of the pleasantest houses, or rather one of the most refined, was the Countess Lanckoronska's, although, to say truth, the mistress was too much of an Austrian.

One evening, as we were having an animated discussion, over a tea table, about current events, some one came in and proclaimed the arrival of a courier from Paris. Vienna had suffered much from the visit of the French; the inhabitants were still labouring under painful reminiscences, and the secrecy observed as to the newly arrived despatches threw the town into consternation.

With the exception of a few Poles assembled in this brilliant saloon, all who were there hated Napoleon *beyond* measure. The most vehement, as well as the most dangerous, of his enemies was undoubtedly the Corsican Pozzo di Borgo, who alone could talk and hate better than all the Germans in the room. We were listening to his prophecies when Count Razumowski, the Russian ambassador, was announced.

We all ran to meet him, and overwhelmed him with questions. The expression of his face was not reassuring. He seemed unhinged; his voice failed him. It was only after some minutes of premonitory silence that he was able to inform us that the mysterious courier, the cause of our recent apprehensions, was only preceding Marshal Berthier by a few hours, whose remarkable mission had the object of asking the Archduchess Marie-Louise in marriage for his august master. Moreover, this upstart soldier, this prince of yesterday's creation, was elected to the signal honour of representing the emperor and king on this auspicious occasion!

This startling proceeding was the sequel to the privy

negotiations concluded and signed by M. de Metternich, at Paris, by the sanction and in name of the Emperor Francis. The Prince de Neufchâtel was at the extreme frontier met by one of the greatest noblemen of the country, Prince Paul Esterhazy.

These details, communicated to us in a state of feverish irritation, could not but be true. You would have said that lightning, striking an electric wire, had pulverised the persons who were crowding round M. de Razumowski. The reaction was not long in coming; after an instant of mute stupour, a cry of horror spontaneously burst from the whole room. Exclamations were loud against the impropriety and baseness of a match that put the first princess of Europe into the power of the most *infamous usurper!*

There was nothing but imprecations and stifled sobs. The ladies had nervous attacks, and the men let themselves go from indignation to fury. There is no more justice to be hoped for on this earth, was the cry. There is nothing to do but to leave Europe and become American colonists, said the women. The most *sensitive* declared that the young princess would die of it, and that such a sacrilege would never be consummated. Others asserted that Napoleon would become insane with glee, and that heaven would countenance such a scandal only to thunder down its wrath the heavier upon the modern Nebuchadnezzar.

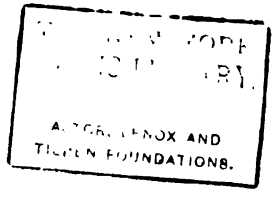
I was calm in the midst of the storm. A sudden idea seized upon my imagination.

" How amusing," said I to myself, "to go to Paris now, for this brilliant misalliance!"

I spent the remainder of the evening meditating over this project, and, on arriving at home, at once confided it to my husband.

Unfortunately, he took no interest in anything outside his regular avocations, and was hoping to return to Poland.

MARIE LOUISE,
Archduchess of Austria, Empress of France.
From an engraving of 1810 by Cardon of the portrait by Guérard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Far from opposing my wish, which at bottom was as yet but a dream, he wrote to his parents, who hastened to send me not only their formal permission, but added instructions concerning an important piece of business they committed to my care.

The day after this stormy tea party the same individuals met together at the same hour, at the same place, for, while severely disapproving the event, they were dying to hear the smallest details. It may be readily gathered that I was there too.

Prince Esterhazy had conducted the ambassador to the imperial palace, where a lodging was ready for him, in spite of custom and etiquette. To make his official entry into the town, he was obliged to cross a bridge hastily thrown over the ruins of the fortifications which the French army had blown up as they retired. The very day of his arrival the marshal was received by the Emperor Francis in special audience, when the *solemn* demand was made.

Thereupon the ambassador immediately remitted to the Archduke Charles an autograph letter from the Emperor Napoleon, which authorised that prince to marry the archduchess in his name. I had great trouble in procuring a copy of the letter; however, I succeeded, and here it is:

"SIR COUSIN: I owe thanks to your Imperial Highness for consenting to represent me in my marriage with the Archduchess Marie-Louise. Your Imperial Highness knows that my old esteem is founded on your eminent qualities, as well as on your great actions. Intensely desirous of giving you a rich proof hereof, I beg you to accept the grand cordon of the Legion of Honour, and also the cross of that order, which I always wear myself, and with which twenty thousand soldiers are decorated who have distinguished themselves on the field of honour. The first of these decorations is the tribute due to your genius as a general, and the second to your bravery as a soldier."

The next day but one the signature of the civil contract was proceeded with, and payment was made of the dowry allotted from times immemorial to archduchesses, which was limited to five hundred thousand francs in gold.

The eleventh of March, 1810, the religious ceremony was celebrated at the Augustine church, followed by an imperial banquet, at which the ambassador was present, contrary to the etiquette of the court of Vienna, which in no case admits strangers to a *family festivity*.

Engraved for the Lady's Magazine.

ARCHDUKE,

Charles of Austria.

From an engraving, by Heath, of 1810.

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CHAPTER II

M. DE NARBONNE

MARIE-LOUISE'S SLIPPER—M. DE NARBONNE AT THE PRINCE DE LIGNE'S—A MENTOR—ARRIVAL AT MUNICH—THE BATH—CELADON—LONE JOURNEY TO STRASSBURG.

In the meanwhile Count Louis de Narbonne appeared, as ambassador extraordinary, charged with escorting, or rather preceding, the young empress, in order to enforce the ceremonial governing such a case and to depart *in nothing* from the rites observed at the date of Marie-Antoinette's advent.

Slightly favoured by nature, nothing was remarkable about Marie-Louise but the beauty of her foot. M. Anatole de Montesquiou, sent as a courier to apprise Napoleon of the accomplishment of the wedding and of the day fixed for the departure of the illustrious betrothed, was secretly enjoined by M. de Narbonne to present to His Majesty the little slipper of the princess in the form of a *portrait*. This entirely new kind of attention met with the highest appreciation at the French court. It was even said that Napoleon had placed against his heart this first pledge of an, alas! ephemeral love.

Projected into Austrian society to counterbalance Berthier's vulgarity and roughness by the behaviour of a great lord and the ways of a courtier, M. de Narbonne was most politely welcomed.

I saw him daily at the de Lignes, where he had set up what he called his headquarters. There, stripping off his ambassadorial dignity, he often amused us at the expense of the *great personages* he was in communication with, who, indignant in their hearts at the proceedings, hardly knew what attitude to assume not to arouse displeasure by a too open disapprobation.

An exceedingly amiable old gentleman, he had in his youth known glittering successes in gallantry at the court of France. Carried away by the Revolution, he seemed a faithful adherent of the imperial government, and exerted himself for a less futile sort of celebrity, but one less easily to be obtained.

Created minister of war by Louis XVI., he kept this exalted place for three months only. The moderate royalists accused him of anglomania, claiming that foreign influence ought not to be tolerated. From another side he was furiously impeached by the clubs as an enemy of the Revolution and the Jacobins. He fled to Switzerland, and lost no time in embarking for England, where he learnt of the death of Robespierre. He was one of the first to greet the accession of Napoleon upon his return from Egypt.

The Count de Narbonne was one of those richly gifted men who traverse history without leaving the glorious mark upon it that their talents ought to have impressed. A distinguished soldier and an able diplomat, he had all that was wanted to play a notable part in those troublous times. Napoleon's renown fascinated him, and from the moment he saw his ambition satisfied, his affairs in order, and his debts paid, he attached himself to the conqueror. I have heard him acknowledge more than once that not only was Napoleon endowed with an entirely superior genius, but that he even had a *very bright mind*. This was infinitely more than the fair ladies of Vienna allowed him. I hap-

MARRIAGE OF NAPOLEON AND MARIE LOUISE
At the Palace of the Louvre, April 2, 1810.
From an engraving by Massard of Rouget's painting.

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pened to hear a discussion which tended to prove, by alleged *incontestable* facts, that *the monster was a coward*, and that soon he would become imbecile, seeing that he was succumbing to epilepsy.

Despite these ridiculous calumnies, and even while indulging in the absurdest outcries, at the occasion of the betrothal the great Austrian lords displayed a luxury and magnificence unheard of elsewhere. The millions Napoleon lavished to put his representative at a level with his hereditary splendour could not efface that sort of glaring varnish which is the character of every new dynasty.

I go back to M. de Narbonne, who is one of the actors in my memoirs, being the mentor to whom my husband entrusted me. On reaching Paris he was to take me to my aunt, Countess Tyszkiewicz, resident for many years at the capital, which she could not bring it upon herself to quit.

Nothing but the marriage ceremony was now delaying our start.

I went to ask my mother's blessing, and to bid her farewell. She evinced surprise at this sudden departure, to which she did not object when she found that my husband and his parents, far from hindering, were encouraging me.

My preparations for the journey were soon concluded. On the appointed day I set out, preceded by His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary, who was good enough to order my horses and engage my lodgings. A more splendid beginning could not have been expected.

At the second relay my escort requested permission to ride in my coach, so as to send on his own carriages in advance.

I assented the more readily as, being alone in the enormous vehicle, I had more room than I wanted. I promised myself invaluable company. M. de Narbonne, a witness of the great revolutionary drama, knew all the prominent

personages of that period; he knew perfectly how to put his audience into touch with his experiences, for he possessed the art of narration to the highest degree. What a godsend on a long journey!

Perhaps at the fireside he might sometimes have appeared to run after wit, and to use the insipid phrases of a superannuated gallantry, but on the highroads one is less fastidious. Moreover, exceedingly amiable, kind, gentle, and obliging, governed by his valet—the veritable valet of the play, who ruined him while feeding his taste for extravagance—he was never in anxiety and always in affable mood.

We rolled on to Munich without halting except for light repasts, most elegantly served by the adroit Frontin, and prepared by the ambassador's head cook.

This manner of travel suited me all the better as I was far from suspecting the motive which actuated my mentor, and the price he intended to put on his attentions. I credited them to the age in which M. de Narbonne had begun life, and simply thought any *old-time* Frenchman would have done likewise.

At two stations from Munich the count went on before me, kindly undertaking to find me quarters, which was not easy, since all the hotels were filled with the numerous train of the Queen of Naples, and also with the attendants provided for the young empress.

I arrived at Munich at nine in the evening, and was directed, by a message left at the town gate, to the *Prinzenhof;* there I not only found a handsome apartment, but a bath all ready.

Scarcely was I in the water, when a small door hidden by a mirror opened softly, and, to my great terror, a man slipped into the room and fell on one knee beside my bath. I gave a dreadful shriek. My maid had just gone out to

get my dress ready, but luckily she had left me a bell, which I rang violently. Before she answered I had time to inspect the cause of my sudden fright. It was that poor M. de Narbonne himself! Alarmed at the effect he was producing, he maintained his humble posture motionless. I thought for an instant he had gone mad, and I looked at him with mingled pity and fear.

He had changed his costume. I had never seen him in such studied attire; to complete the extraordinary masquerade, which transformed an ancient sexagenarian into a dandy of the day, he had put on rouge!

Inextinguishable laughter succeeded the fright I had undergone when my old Celadon tried to impart his flame in words. My maid, whom I continued to ring for, at last came in, and the poor hero of this absurd adventure, rising with some difficulty, escaped in dire confusion.

Henceforth we could not have travelled together without feeling mortal embarrassment. I therefore sent for my travelling steward, and told him I had decided to leave at daybreak. I ordered him to pay liberally, and to keep my plan silent. All were still asleep in the hotel while, seated in my coach, I was starting out directly for Strassburg, where I wanted to see the cathedral and the tomb of the Marshal de Saxe. This journey, interesting in itself, was chiefly so to me because of the circumstances; moreover, I was leaving Poland for the first time; until then my travels had not gone beyond the town of Vienna, where I used to visit my mother.

CHAPTER III

CEREMONIAL ENTRY INTO PARIS

THE COUNTESS TYSZKIEWICZ—DISENCHANTMENT—PARISIAN PLEASANTRIES—THE PROCESSION—PICTURE OF MARIE-LOUISE—THE IMPERIAL GUARD—THE PAGES—THE SPIRIT OF THE CROWD—PRESENTATION TO MADAME DE SOUZA.

My aunt had had an apartment engaged for me at Paris, in the Place Louis XV., in the handsome building known as the Garde-Meuble. There was then a furnished house there, to which I immediately repaired.

Countess Tyszkiewicz came to see me the day after my arrival. Much interested in current events, she wanted to know the talk of Vienna.

Said she, after her curiosity was satisfied:

"Napoleon is himself surprised at the greatness of his destiny."

My aunt did not like the emperor, but she feared him, and she gave vent to her disrespectful astonishment in a low tone of voice.

"Imagine the luck of that man! It seems to be a matter of fact that no one can resist him," she said. "After upsetting the world, vanquishing Austria, and blowing up the ramparts of the capital, the unhappy king whom he has thus humiliated gives him his daughter, while suing for peace!"

My aunt, who was secretly attached to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where M. de Talleyrand had introduced her, pretended to know everything that transpired at the Tuileries, through the connections M. de Talleyrand had there. She assured me that the emperor had at first been dazzled by the brilliancy of such a match, but that the extraordinary conduct of Marie-Louise had quickly dispelled the charm, and in two days Napoleon's exquisite politeness had given way to the rather too imperative manners of the great man, justified on this occasion, however, by the example of Henry IV. He went to meet his young bride, and established himself at Compiègne, where, by a facility entirely misplaced towards one who expected to inspire a sort of aversion, this princess disillusioned the hero, and disenchanted all of those who had been pleased to look upon her as a victim sacrificed to the repose of Europe. The Compiègne reception gave the Parisians food for discussion for at least a week. The Asiatic luxury which the emperor had displayed in the interior arrangements of the palace was unsparingly criticised.

The dressing-room had been draped with the most beautiful Indian shawls. It was maliciously asserted that Joséphine's formed the richest ornaments, though it was afterwards proved that Napoleon never touched the gifts he had lavished upon his first wife.

After minutely surveying all the details of this reception, *probable results* were rumoured about, *in a whisper*. In less than two hours Paris knew how the young sovereign was to be taken, and I was not a little surprised at the freedom of the comments which circulated in the saloons. Neither bad jokes nor puns were excluded. As we were entering Holy Week, the remark was ventured that the future empress wished to make her entrance as a *saint*, and this feeble pun met with tremendous favour, for the French,

extremely particular about native wit, are not enough so when it is made to order.

The promise of the wedding solemnities, and the festivities to follow, sent people's thoughts into another channel.

I had to choose between two equally interesting sights: either to witness the grand entry of the august pair among the immense crowds who were to await them in the Champs-Élysées, or shut myself up early in the morning, in full dress, in the Tuileries chapel, whither my aunt would take me. I decided in favour of the entry, the more strongly as, not having yet been able to be presented, it seemed to me improper to intrigue for a ticket and usurp a place.

I saw the royal procession from my window. The emperor, in Spanish dress—the same he had worn at the coronation—was in a gilded glass carriage, harnessed with eight Andalusian horses of rare beauty. Their dun coats perfectly matched the green of the gorgeous harness stitched with gold and silver. They went *at a walk*, and seemed quite proud of the part allotted them.

Marie-Louise, covered with the *diamonds of Golconda*, seated at the emperor's right, did not appear to absorb his entire attention. He seemed anxious, and observant of the effect which the imposing spectacle made on the populace, listening absent-mindedly to the few words addressed to him by his young wife, whose Austrian bows would have ruined a prettier face than hers. The French, spoiled by the beauty of Joséphine, and not well pleased with this match, remained cool and impassive. There was no enthusiasm, and not much in the way of acclaim.

To tell the number of generals and marshals who preceded and followed the imperial carriage, in full uniform and on horseback, would be tedious work, and nearly as difficult as to name the kings and queens gathered together to take part in this magnificent affair. Their resplendent

ARRIVAL OF NAPOLEON AND MARIE LOUISE AT COMPIÈGNE, MARCH 28, 1810.

From an engraving by Nargeot after Mme. Auzon's painting.

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carriages, their numerous trains, the richness and variety of the dresses, the beauty of the women, the glitter of the diamonds—it was all wonderful. But nothing, to my mind, could equal the splendid line composed by the Imperial Guard, grown old under arms, and distinguished on many battlefields, where, led on by the miraculous gray cloak, they had many a time settled the question of victory. They alone frantically hailed their chief, whom they saw in all the grandeur of majesty.

Round the imperial coach, pages "scarcely emerged from childhood," richly clad and standing on steps symmetrically placed, like butterflies ready to fly away at the least sign, gave a poetical touch to the cumbersome vehicle. When the gate of the Tuileries garden, which was only opened once a year—when the emperor went to the legislature—was closed on the royal party, who among us would have thought it was never to open again in triumph? Alas! The happy days were gone by! The rumbling of the storm was to begin.

The illuminations and fireworks continued far into the night. Wine spurted from the fountains, gold and medals were distributed in profusion—it was all gorgeous and magnificent, but there was neither joy nor heartfelt mirth.

Some—and they were the majority—regretted Joséphine, whose rare kindness and gracious manner had endeared her to the nation; others regarded the arrival of an Austrian princess as a presage of ill fortune. Nearly all, tired of war, of triumphs, and conquests, had got into the state of being dissatisfied with everything; having nothing left to wish for, they gave rein to the discontent that the incessantly renewed conscriptions nourished in the bosoms of their families. Nor did the crowd appear to partake in this splendid celebration, excepting through a mechanical curiosity.

Whoever have written their memoirs must have felt

some sort of embarrassment in speaking of themselves. And so I have not yet mentioned my interview with M. de F——. After several fruitless attempts upon the porter, he finally forced his way, and suddenly appeared at my door. He had met the Duke de Dalberg on the staircase, who had been to see me, and thought he had the right to resist any further refusals.

I admit that his appearance troubled me. We talked of everything I should have to see and do. He offered me his services and his advice, and told me that his mother wished to make my acquaintance; she wanted to thank me for the consideration my parents had shown her son during the visit of the French to Warsaw.

He proposed to pay me a visit with her the next morning. I accepted the more eagerly as I was very curious to meet a person whose delightful novels and letters had charmed me.

It was quite natural that I should do my utmost to be agreeable to her, but I quickly perceived the uselessness of my exertions. Madame de Souza was concerned with herself *exclusively;* she trimmed every one of her sentences, and interjected into the conversation happy and sparkling sayings which seemed *prepared.* In her mode of expression there was neither charm nor warmth; it was better to read her works than to listen to her conversation. I was furthermore shocked by a kind of intimacy she tried to establish, from the first day, between us *three.* She had *fatuity* in her son! *Pride,* one might have pardoned her. But the presumption with which she seemed to predict his conquests were not in good taste; himself appeared to be embarrassed by it, and made vain efforts to make his mother return to a more serious and proper tone. I took umbrage at such thinly disguised impudence, and was polite but cold; we separated none too well pleased with each other.

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MARQUISE DE SOUZA-BOTELHO, THE NOVELIST
(Afterwards Comtesse de Flahaut, and mother of "Charles de F——"
of the present "Memoirs").

From an engraving by Massard after Staal.

CHAPTER IV

THE COURT

THE EMPEROR—MARIE-LOUISE—COURT PARADOXES—ELISA—PAULINE BORGHESE—THE QUEEN OF NAPLES—THE PRINCESS DE TALLEYRAND—COUNTESS TYSZKIEWICZ'S CIRCLE.

As soon as the empress was installed at the Tuileries the presentations were proceeded with. As a foreigner, I was to be presented not only to the emperor and empress, but also to all the queens and princesses of the family. Each had her day, and so every morning it was a case of a long and fatiguing toilet, and of spending the best hours of the day in putting on and taking off a *court dress*. In the evening came rest—at the theatre.

The emperor received about noon, in his study. Standing with one hand leaning on his desk, he waited, bestowing a gracious glance on you if you were young and pretty.

He received me with unusual civility, which considerably diminished the awkwardness of the ceremony. He was good enough to ask news of everybody in my family.

Leaving the emperor's study, we passed into the empress' waiting-room, where a number of people were already assembled. She was quitting her apartments, followed by a numerous and dazzling train. The taste with which she was dressed had made her a little *less ugly*, but the expression of her face remained the same. Not an

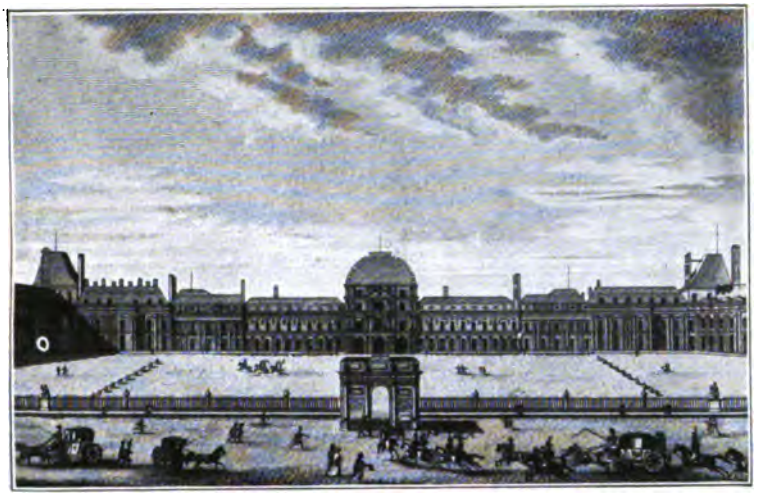
affable smile, not an inquiring look lit up that wooden face. She went round the circle of her visitors, moving from one to the other like those machine dolls that go when they are wound up, showing off their stiff, slender figures, and their large, pale-blue, porcelain eyes, staring and fixed.

The emperor walked at her side, prompting her in what she had to say, chiefly to the people whom he wished to favour. When my turn came, the lady who was presenting me having given the young sovereign my name, I distinctly overheard the words, *very graceful*, muttered by Napoleon. She repeated them so drily, and with such a Teutonic accent, that they charmed me very slightly.

This court, so magnificent from a distance, lost by being seen at close quarters. A sort of confusion and discord were observable there which counteracted the air of greatness and dignity one had a right to expect. The wives of the marshals, little accustomed to the court mantle, were placed by the side of the most elegant and best dressed women. It was almost the same thing with their husbands, whose embroidered uniforms, so resplendent on parade, so fine on the field of battle, contrasted unpleasantly with rather uncultured language and manners. It was like a rehearsal, at which the actors were trying on their dresses and repeating their parts. This extraordinary mixture would have evoked laughter if the principal character had not inspired a sort of respect and fear, which made the idea of absurdity vanish, or at least annulled it.

Napoleon's sisters did not resemble each other in the least.

Elisa, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, added to her brother's features an infinitely harder expression. A great deal of mind and character was attributed to her; nevertheless, I have never heard anything quoted that she did or said. The great are always surrounded by echoes ready to repeat any able thing they may utter. Silence is a kind of denial. So I was not much impressed.

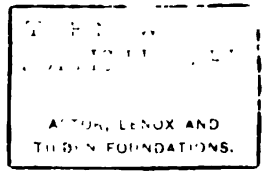


THE TUILERIES.

From an engraving of 1818 by Couché fils.

THE PALACE OF THE TUILERIES.

From an engraving by Floyd after Allom.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Princess Pauline Borghese was a type of classical beauty to be found in Greek statues. Despite the things she did which hastened the *ravages of time,* in the evening, by the aid of a little artifice, she captured all suffrages, and not a woman would have dared to dispute her the apple which Canova awarded her after *unveiled contemplation,* as it was said.

To the most delicate and regular features imaginable she added an admirable figure *too often admired.* Thanks to so many graces, her wit passed unnoticed; nothing but her gallantries were spoken of, and certainly they gave plenty of matter for discussion.

The youngest of the three, Caroline, Queen of Naples, did not approach her sister in classic beauty; but she had a much more mobile countenance, a dazzling fair complexion, irreproachable arms, hands, and waist, and, without being tall, carried herself like a queen. You would have said that she had come into the world all prepared for the part which fate had in store for her. As to her intellect, it is sufficient to quote Talleyrand's saying, who asserted that this head of a pretty woman rested on the shoulders of a statesman.

No one was surprised at the emperor's choosing her to go to meet his betrothed. Still, the enormous difference existing between Marie-Louise and Caroline prevented their ever understanding or liking each other.

Hortense, Queen of Holland, was away, as well as her sister-in-law, the wife of the Viceroy of Italy; they had left a few days after my arrival. I could, therefore, rest.

My aunt took the opportunity to take me to M. de Talleyrand's, whose slave she had been for a quarter century. Delayed at the court by the exercise of his duties, Talleyrand was not able to return in time to receive us, and sent his excuses. It was a simple matter; nobody thought of making a formality of it.

What appeared stranger to us was that, entering the drawing-room, we only found a maid-of-honour of the princess to receive us. We were informed that, *seduced by a ray of sunlight*, Her Highness had just gone out to take a turn in the Bois. Guests arrived in succession, and, as the person charged with doing the honours in the absence of the mistress of the house had predicted, we waited more than an hour. Excuses would have been quite in order, but, fearing *derogation* if she evinced politeness, the princess swept in with a majestic air, talked to us about the fine weather and about the balmy atmosphere, finding it most natural that we should have waited for her.

After that I avoided the company of Madame de Talleyrand, impertinent princesses not being to my taste, especially when they are upstarts. She, known all over Paris as Madame Grand, was such a nonentity that it was impossible to conceal it; not even her rank could do it. Her blunders were quoted, just like her husband's witty sayings.

At this time she was at least sixty. Nevertheless, her position secured her flatterers, who told her she was still beautiful. She also indulged in extensive hair-dressing, and wore flowers on her head.

When M. de Talleyrand sat down to his game of whist, or was absent, a deadly tedium reigned in those rooms. And yet the greater number of the regular frequenters of the house were clever people. The princess laid claims to greatness, and to authority on questions of etiquette, which made her unendurable. All who could boast independence, and had no official relations with the prince, only went to his place when they were sure of finding him alone.

Once a week, or thereabouts, M. de Talleyrand's friends met at my aunt's, where I was scarcely any better entertained. She invited distinguished compatriots and passing strangers in turn. Her house was much in vogue.

HORTENSE, QUEEN OF HOLLAND.

From an engraving by Regnault of the portrait by herself.

THE NEW YORK
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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

I can hardly tell the unpleasant surprise I felt at seeing that the sole amusement was to gamble for fabulous sums. The bank was kept by men whom nobody knew nor spoke to; they spread out their wealth, so as to tempt the spectators. The guests seemed to shrink from their touch; they were treated like pariahs. Their suspicious glances travelled from one to another, without for a moment losing sight of the gamblers' hands. In all this there was something humiliating and devilish. The love of gain alone presided at this strange pastime. The drawn faces of the gamblers, the stolid, impassive attitude of the bankers, the silence that reigned in the cardroom—where in one night the whole happiness of a family was often staked—it was all odious to me. I could not withhold an exhibition of astonishment, perhaps even of my *artless innocence*, but my aunt replied coldly that it was easily seen *I came from a distance*, that such diversions were indulged in everywhere, and that the *prince*, a hard worker, came to her house for distractions which his position forbade him at home.

It was at this infernal table that for the first time I met the Duchess de Luynes, built like a policeman and dressed like the commonest woman; she played furiously, had a stentorian voice, laughed boisterously, argued with choice coarseness—the whole passing for *originality*. It was even the fashion to admire the nobility and staunchness of her character, and the constancy of her opinions. As for me, I never could habituate myself to that masculine exterior and those guard-house manners.

Ah, my dear Hôtel de Ligne, how often I remembered it! Floods of light did not illuminate that modest little saloon; the frugal supper in no way resembled the banquets presented to these sybarites! But what a variety of cleverness and wit, what charming and open hilarity! How preferable was that anchorite's fare to these sad feasts!

CHAPTER V.

THE FESTIVITIES

THE PRINCESS BORGHESE AT NEUILLY—THE CASTLE OF SCHOENBRUNN—MARIE-LOUISE'S EMOTION—THE BALL AT THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY.

THE Princess Pauline was the first to entertain the illustrious pair. It was in the month of May. Neuilly, where she lived, seemed to have put on a crown of flowers to receive the brilliant throng, which flocked from all parts of the earth to witness all these wonders.

At the park gate the carriages were ordered to stop at a theatre improvised by fairies. Light, transparent galleries, grass stairs adorned with exotic plants, boxes decorated with garlands of flowers and filled with pretty women, a starred canopy—this whole poetical and surprising scene recalled the gardens of Armida. The young empress, who generally admired nothing, could not suppress a slight exclamation on setting foot in this hall where she was expected.

The emperor, with more grace and cordiality, evinced astonishment and satisfaction; he thanked his sister delicately.

The best actors of the Théâtre Français acted a piece to which no one listened; the most renowned dancers executed

a ballet which no one looked at! Golden harps, melodious chants, celestial music, would have been needed there!

The play ended, Pauline took her sister's arm, and the royal procession, which we followed, made towards the ball-room across the park, lit up by means of thousands of lamps concealed under the hedges of flowers whose perfume embalmed the air.

Several orchestras, distributed with infinite cunning, successively answered each other in imitation of mountain echoes; these newly devised harmonies produced a ravishing effect.

We thus passed from marvel to marvel. Now it was a pretty temple, where love was awakened, caught by the graces; now a hermitage of stern aspect; pilgrims returning from Palestine were begging hospitality; the hermit opened the little grated door of his rustic chapel, and the singing began. All talents were summoned to this festal event. The graces came from the opera and the pilgrims from the conservatory.

The singing and dancing had no other purpose than to eulogise the perfections of the young empress, and in every way to celebrate the gladness her coming had aroused. Love proffered her a crown of roses pilfered from the graces, and the troubadours sang romances full of praise and hope.

Insensibly the pathway contracts, the grove darkens, the harmonious sounds fade away, and the fairy who has created all these spells affects great displeasure; she pretends to have lost her way, and takes us along barren walks.

We cross a hanging bridge, under which the water forms a cascade so skilfully lighted that it seems on fire.

In the midst of the silence the emperor's voice is heard; he complains of the darkness, and has the manner of really believing that his sister has mistaken the road, when of a

sudden, at the turn of a maze, we merge abruptly upon a lawn flooded with a light so bright that you would have said it was stolen from the sun.

At the end of the lawn stood the Castle of Schoenbrunn, with its great court, its fountains, its portals, and, in addition, with movement and life such as are foreign to that gorgeous habitation. There were the components of festivity: carriages, bands of promenaders, bashful dairymaids with the traditional cap, farm hands impressed from among the imperial footmen, groups of Tyroleans coming forward to the tune of bagpipes and dancing the national waltz. The art with which at this distance the proportions of the huge castle had been reproduced, the scientific management of light and shade effects, everything deceived the eye so perfectly that it was allowable to believe in magic; and those who, like myself, knew Schoenbrunn could imagine themselves in that royal dwelling.

The courtiers asserted that at this sight the empress had *burst into tears!* That would have been most natural. The memories of her childhood ought to have drawn some tears from her, but I can testify that her emotion, if she had any, was very evanescent, for at the moment I looked at her I perceived no trace of feeling in her cold and *stolid* countenance. As for the emperor, he thanked his sister repeatedly, and gave her infinite credit for the pains she had bestowed on the arrangements for this celebration, the first and finest of all that were held in honour of Marie-Louise.

The Prince de Schwartzemberg, the Austrian ambassador, had consented to yield in that respect only to the new empress' sister-in-law. The ball he gave followed the Neuilly festivity, and owed its celebrity to the dreadful catastrophe which made it historical. The space at the embassy was not large enough to accommodate the two thousand people invited; in the middle of the garden an enormous ballroom

had been built, communicating with the apartments by a handsome gallery. This room and this gallery, made of boards, were covered with striped canvas, and inside hung with pink satin and silver gauze draperies. I happened to be in the gallery when the conflagration declared itself, and I perhaps owed my salvation to an incident which had annoyed me very much.

I was wearing an open tulle dress, and where it met a bunch of white lilac was fastened to my girdle by a diamond chain composed of lyres hooked one into another; when I danced this chain came undone. The Countess de Brignole, who was my chaperon that evening, observing that I was about to waltz with the viceroy, was good enough to take me into the gallery to assist me in removing the importunate chain. While she was kindly attending to this task, I was one of the first to notice the slight smoke from a candelabrum placed under a gauze festoon. Several young men having gathered about us, I hastened to show them what was as yet but a warning. At once one of them jumped upon a bench; wishing to avert the danger, he violently tore down the draping, which in its rapid descent over the candlesticks took fire and spread the flame to the striped canvas ceiling. Very fortunately for myself, Madame de Brignole did not face the danger, but, without a moment's delay, seized my arm, went through all the rooms at a run, rushed to the bottom of the staircase, and did not draw breath until she had crossed the street and had taken refuge in Madame de Regnault's house, opposite the embassy. Falling on a sofa there, exhausted by the race and her agitation, she pointed me to the balcony, so that I might take account of what was ensuing. This sudden alarm was incomprehensible to me, for I should have preferred to continue to dance, so impossible did a menace of danger seem in a place where the emperor was!

Soon clouds of smoke enveloped the ballroom and gallery we had just left. The music was heard no longer; noisy confusion had incontinently succeeded the gaiety and splendour of the party. Screams, groans reached us; the wind carried distinct words, despairing accents; people called each other, sought each other, wanted certainty of the fate of those they loved, and who were incurring this awful peril.

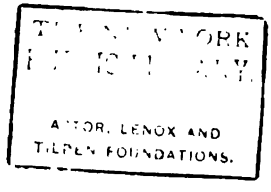
Among the victims was the Princess de Schwartzemberg, the ambassador's sister-in-law, who, missing her daughter from her side, dashed into the flames;—she was crushed by a chandelier whose rope had given way. Alas! her child, safe from danger, was loudly crying out for her. The Princess de la Leyen suffered the same fate, but survived for a few days. Her daughter was affianced to I know not what German prince; she had the strength of mind to insist upon the accomplishment of the marriage at her bed of pain. A number of other persons perished. It was the less spoken of as many of the names were unknown by those who, come from abroad or from the provinces, thus paid for an instant of pleasure with their lives. Some of the women were robbed of their jewellery; thieves having scaled the wall separating the garden from the street, they drove their trade in full security under cover of the general confusion.

In a few minutes Madame Regnault's saloon was filled with sufferers. It was a spectacle at once terrifying and weird to see all those people in floral wreaths and ball dresses wailing in a manner that contrasted so cruelly with their finery.

So we spent a great portion of the night in comforting and relieving them as much as lay in our power. When daylight came we had to think of going home. Servants and carriages had all disappeared. Those who could walk found themselves reduced to going on foot in their ball

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG.

From an engraving by Lignon after a drawing by Vigneron.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dresses and white satin shoes. At that early hour the streets are crowded with market waggons; we were probably taken for lunatics, and we were subjected to the broadsides of some jokers.

However frivolous the Parisians may be, this accident created a lively and profound impression. It gave rise to all kinds of suggestions; it was ascribed to the machinations of infamous politicians. What is certain is that zealous courtiers persuaded the emperor to retire before the crowd had blocked all the issues, so attempting to sow an odious suspicion in his mind; but, always composed in danger, Napoleon would not listen to these contemptible insinuations. He went back to the embassy after putting the empress into her carriage, telling Prince Schwartzemberg that he came to help him *extinguish the fire.*

This phrase produced a great effect, penetrated the Austrians with admiration and gratitude. All the Germans present at the festivity, headed by the ambassador, surrounded the emperor, and this rampart of more or less hostile hearts for the *moment* equalled a detachment of the Imperial Guard.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIETY

AT DENON'S—THE MUMMY'S FOOT—THE VISCOUNTESS DE LAVAL'S CIRCLE—PETRARCH AND LAURA—A DINNER AT M. DE TALLEYRAND'S—THE DUKE DE LAVAL—THE DAVOUTS AT SAVIGNY—THE MARSHAL'S PARTRIDGES—M. DE F——T—LUNCHEON WITH MADAME DE SOUZA—LABÉDOYÈRE—THE DUCHESS OF COURLAND—TALLEYRAND AND HIS SERAGLIO.

My social career once begun, its duties took up all my time. I barely was able to find a moment, of a morning, in which to visit the museums and studios. I had met M. Denon. He had exquisite taste, delightful good-humour, and was obliging beyond measure. He was good enough to escort me to the Louvre, which at that time was enriched by works of art captured from Italy. A few days after, the amiable director invited me to luncheon in order to show me his little private *museum*—a collection of valuable articles he had gathered in all countries, especially in Egypt. He was very proud of a little mummy's foot, which was so attractive, so dainty, and so nicely oxidised by time that there was a temptation to steal it, to make a paper-weight of it.

"Look," said M. Denon, "at this wonderful thing! You

must know that it probably comes down, by a direct line of descent, from the Pharaohs."

"Who knows," said I, "perhaps it is a foot of one of the wives of Sesostris."

"Let it be Sesostris, then," he replied; "but at that rate, she was the woman he loved best, and mourned all his life."

My aunt had presented me to her friends. They nearly all lived in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which is to say that they were of the Opposition. They abused everything, mourned a great deal, and did not enjoy themselves at all. I only enjoyed myself moderately among them. The only pleasant house my aunt took me to was the Viscountess Laval's. This clever woman had taken the cheerful side of things; she gloried, so to speak, in poverty, never mentioned her losses, and did not seem to resent others having become rich. Their fortunes had to console them for not being Montmorencys—that was all!

A select society from which the young people of all parties were not excluded, to enter which they even made plots, often met in the viscountess' small drawing-room. To be seen there conferred a mark of urbanity and good taste. The household—I mean to say the servants—consisted of a butler and a negress, who was something between a slave and a confidant. She came in to make the tea. At these very modest entertainments I have seen all the most distinguished people in Paris assembled. M. de Talleyrand and the Duchess of Courland were among the most assiduous of the regular visitors. Madame de Talleyrand never came: *she did herself justice.* It was only there that I heard people talk freely; politics and the partisan spirit were tabooed. Madame de Laval indicated the theme of conversation with infinite skill. As soon as she saw the actors had taken up their parts she was silent, and appeared absorbed with her skein of coarse wool, unless a particularly

interesting question aroused her. Then the others, in their turn, became silent; she spoke with such an original and fascinating charm that every one fell under her spell. She had been extremely pretty, and her black, intelligent eyes were still surprisingly lustrous. I have heard a story as to how her old brother-in-law, the Duke de Laval, so famous for his innocent remarks, one day wishing to express the admiration he felt for that velvety glance, exclaimed:

"It must be acknowledged, sister, that your eyes are the colour of velvet breeches."

I knew this poor duke in deep humiliation. His blunders made me die of laughter; I even conceived the notion of making a collection of them, for they were really remarkable; unhappily—or very happily—one forgets nonsense quickly.

I shall tell the following anecdote, however:

It was at a dinner at M. de Talleyrand's. We were at table; the long awaited Duke de Laval finally arrived. The master of the house, much politer than his wife, lost himself in apologies. The duke at this time indulged in the mania of buying old portraits; he ingenuously confessed that a sale of pictures had retarded him.

"I wager," said M. de Talleyrand, "that you have been acquiring some old daub again."

"Oh, well, so I have!" replied the duke with importance. "It is one of the daubs you would be glad enough to take to adorn your library—the portraits of two celebrated characters."

"Bah!" said M. de Talleyrand, with his disdainful lip, "and who are these characters?"

"Wait a little," answered the poor *dilettante*, visibly embarrassed and eating his soup, to give himself time for reflection. "The woman's name is the same as Madame de Regnault's: she is a certain Laura. As to the gentleman,

I always forget his name; it is something like *patraque!*" (French for rubbishy or trumpery old thing).

Every one was silent; it was one of those perfidious pauses which always precede outbursts of mad laughter.

And here is the host apostrophising the poor duke on his slender memory, without the least regard for his guests, at whom he casts quiet but malicious glances.

"Then learn the names of your heroes once for all, my dear friend; you of course wanted to say Laura and *Plutarch.*"

"Yes, that is it!—That devil of a Plutarch, I am always forgetting him. There were some at the sale who said Petrarch, it seems to me, but they were ignoramuses who knew the *real name* of Laura's lover no better than I did. Plutarch! Everybody knows that! I knew it too—it's historical!"

This was too much; the long restrained shouts of laughter were Homeric. M. de Talleyrand alone held aloof from our hilarity, and, throwing a sly look at the whole company, had the audacity to question the duke as to this mirth, whose reason he pretended not to *guess.*

Madame de Souza, whose son was unwell, suddenly left us, glad to have something to amuse her patient with. For some days, indeed, I had not seen M. de F——, but every morning a bunch of violets was handed me, accompanied by my programme for the day. Now there was something curious to see, or again a *compulsory* visit which must not be neglected. It was in this way that I went to the Lady Marshal Davout's, who had heaped civilities on me during her sojourn at Warsaw at the time when her husband was in command in Poland. As she spent her summers at Savigny, it was thither I had to go to find her. I sent to her town house, to know what the most suitable hour would be for me to pay my visit. The answer was that the morning

would be. I therefore betook myself to Savigny under a burning sky, badly protected by a very small hat trimmed with violets, and very much encumbered in my lilac laced boots exactly matching a high-necked dress of Neapolitan cloth of the same colour—Madame Germont, the oracle of fashion, having herself devised my whole costume.

This matutinal dressing up seemed to me slightly untimely.

However that might have been, I promised myself an agreeable visit. The lady's Paris house had given me a great idea of her taste and her wealth, and I expected to find her luxuriously bestowed at Savigny. I arrived at about three o'clock. The castle, surrounded by a moat and a wall, had an hermetically closed door for an entrance. The grass grew in the moat; you would have said it was a place abandoned many years before. My lackey having at length found the bell-pull, a rather ill-clad little girl came out, after some minutes, to ask what we wanted.

"Is the lady marshal at home?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon, *they are*, and the marshal, too," answered the little girl.

And at once she ran for one of the men-servants of the castle, who followed her without hurrying, the while buttoning his livery.

I sent in my name, and, leaning back in my carriage, waited a long time, again hardly knowing whether to persist or merely to leave a card.

After a short quarter of an hour a footman at last presented himself at the carriage door, and asked me into a large courtyard; he apologised for the slowness of the attendance, confessing without any ado that when I arrived the servants were working in the garden, and that himself was occupied in cleaning up the orchard.

I was taken through several entirely denuded rooms; I

was shown into one little less ornamental than the first, but at least there were a sofa and chairs! The lady marshal was not long in appearing. I easily perceived she had dressed up for me, for she was still sticking some pins into her bodice. After a few minutes of languishing conversation she rang to have her husband notified. Then we resumed our painful interview. It was not that Madame Davout was deficient in the ways of the world, or devoid of that sort of cleverness which facilitates intercourse between two people of the same social rank, but there was a certain stiffness about her which might have been taken for haughtiness. She never lost the *marshalship* from sight; never did a gracious smile animate her severely beautiful features. She was always Homer's Juno, or, better still, the strong woman who would not laugh until the Last Day.

The marshal finally arrived in a state of perspiration which bore witness to politeness; he sat down all out of breath, and, holding his handkerchief to wipe his forehead, he took care to moisten it with saliva, so as to remove the dust more thoroughly that covered his face. This rather military freedom tallied badly with his wife's starched deportment; she was visibly put out by it. Finding myself superfluous in this mute scene I rose, intending to take my leave, but I was asked to stay to luncheon. While the table was being laid we took a walk in the park. There was not a road laid out, the lawns were grown with high grass all ready to become haystacks, the trees clipped during the Revolution were sprouting like thickets; at every bush I left a piece of my flounces, and my lilac laced boots had taken a greenish hue. The marshal urged us on with voice and gesture, promising us a delightful surprise! What was not my disappointment when, turning a clump of young oaks, we found ourselves facing three small wicker huts! The duke went down on the ground on one knee, and exclaimed:

"Ah, here they are! Here they are!"

Upon which, modulating his voice:

"Peep—peep—peep!"

Immediately a flock of partridges fluttered about the marshal's head.

"Do not let the others out until the youngest have gone in again, and give these ladies some bread. They will enjoy themselves like queens," said he to the yokel who performed the duties of gamekeeper.

And there we were, in the scorching sun, feeding partridges!

With imperturbable dignity the duchess emptied the basket handed to her. As for me, I nearly fainted, and, the thing becoming too much for me, remarked that the sky was overcast and that we were threatened with a storm.

Returning to the castle, I saw some masons whitewashing one of the turrets, which up to then had escaped the sacrilege of renovation, and had worn the rust that time alone can give.

I could not keep a sort of criticism from the marshal. His wife understood me; I even thought to discern in her look and her disdainful smile a previous discussion on the subject of the turret. The husband did not disguise the fact from me that my observations were not to his taste. He even launched out very *energetically* against the mania of old walls.

Luncheon over, I slipped away in full haste, vowing, though a little late, never to be caught again.

On the way I meditated on all I had seen, and concluded to myself that the lovely land of France offered singular contrasts, that the great lords of other days were absurdly ignorant, and that the heroes of the day, after paying for their riches with their blood, employed it in a mean and paltry fashion.

I described my visit in few words to him who had ad-

vised me not to miss it. About a fortnight back he had left off coming to see me; he wrote to me that, his chest ailing, he had been forbidden to go out. Meanwhile I often met his mother; she did not appear to me to be anxious.

After a time he said he was better, and informed me that the doctor had allowed him to take the air, on condition of his going home before sundown. It was telling me enough to let me guess he would come in the morning. I waited for him, and confess that for the first time I conceived some doubts as to the rectitude of his conduct regarding myself. I imagined that, appearing sick and sad, he wanted to begin by disarming my pride, and I put myself on my guard. At three o'clock a cabriolet stopped at the door, and a horse's tread I never mistook for another made my heart beat.

We were at the end of May, but there was such a nipping cold that I had had a fire lit; wanting to assume countenance, I began to poke the fire. He pushed up an arm-chair, and sat near me without breaking the silence. I raised my eyes, and was painfully moved by the change this brief illness had wrought. Nevertheless, I was hard enough to say to him:

"So you have been really ill?"

"No," said he, "not very, and now I am well."

These few words, spoken in a faint voice, at once made the pyramid of distrust and severity crumble, which I had arduously erected.

"Pardon!" I said; "pardon! Forget that silly question. Answer my sincere interest, my lively friendship; forget that stupid nonsensical question. I beg you, tell me about yourself! What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, truly. I have been suffering, but it is over. Each time that I undergo a vivid emotion I spit blood; that is all." And he sat quite still, looking at the fire.

"You have not doubted my interest, I hope," I resumed.

"I have thought of you more than you suppose." And I felt myself blush, and, with an involuntary movement, covered my face with my hands.

"Ah! do not tell me that!" he cried; "do not talk to me like that! Treat me like an old friend always; it was only on that understanding you accepted me."

I knew not what to think; I was painfully affected, and lost myself in conjecture.

Apparently wishing to break off an interview equally troublesome to both, he took out his watch and showed me how the hand was jumping from three to four o'clock.

"Look," said he, "look how fast it is going! And yet it is thus that life goes; those who suffer ought to take patience. I have promised my mother to return at the hour prescribed by the doctor. She even wanted to prevent me from going out, because of the cold, but that was expecting too much of my common sense. I have more than I am credited with, but not enough to take care of myself."

He took my hand, pressed it to his heart, and got up abruptly, without giving me time to speak. Arrived at the door, he said to me:

"Be good, come to luncheon to-morrow at my mother's; we shall have Labédoyère, who is off to Spain. He very much wishes to see you; grant him the favour; he is worthy of it, I assure you."

I nodded, and he went, leaving me in a vague state of sadness, the reason of which I could not explain to myself. Nothing was changed in our relations; I had heard nothing to afflict me. Two months nearly had thus elapsed between intellectual pleasures and the charm of an affection shrouded in mystery, which coloured the least actions of my life. But the prism once broken! That short space of time, which remained in my memory as the happiest of my long career, why did it not last? Alack! I had dark presentiments, and something told me the drama was about to begin.

Thenceforth, I admit, society lost its chief attractions for me.

Propriety, however, requiring that I should not in any way change my mode of life without a plausible motive, I continued to go into society; I imposed pleasures and parties on myself by force; I tried to stupefy myself.

The next day I went to the luncheon. I saw the young Labédoyère, so handsome, so brave, so happy!

M. de F—— proved much less gloomy than the day before. I even noticed him to affect, in the presence of his mother and his friend, a joviality not natural to him, and I gathered from it that he had kept his secret. As he was coughing, his mother scolded him for going out the day before.

"Alas!" said he, "I am punished more than enough, for the doctor has condemned me to a week's confinement. But as soon as I am allowed to go out I shall take our illustrious travellers to Malmaison."

He designated the Duchess of Courland and myself by this pompous name. The duchess was the widow of the last duke, and had been dispossessed at her husband's death. Russia left her the title and the immense fortune which the duke had secured his wife by the marriage contract. She had come to Warsaw, I hardly know on what grounds, and had been magnificently welcomed by Stanislaus Augustus, then king. The duchess took me into her heart for the sake of the prince who had met her so gallantly; I often accompanied her to court and to official ceremonials. What fascinated me was that her carriage went in without standing in the line. At the period I mention the duchess was in her decline, but she kept remnants of beauty which assured her belated conquests. Her princely fortune permitted her to keep house on a grand scale; everybody solicited the favour of admission. M. de Talleyrand, who was not insensible to the charms of this woman, had placed

her in the first rank of Madame de Laval's intimates, and in this circle one was supposed to admire everything the duchess did—above all, her tasteful dresses and her diamonds were admired. I have more than once seen her arrive at midnight; she came to show off her ball dress or some new jewelry, just as a woman of twenty might have done. Her old adorer always waited for her, and eyed her with a fervour to make his whole seraglio die of jealousy, my Aunt Tyszkiewicz being one of them.

M. Labédoyère.

From a rare print.

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CHAPTER VII

ROUND ABOUT PARIS

THE COUNTESS MNISZECH—THE PANORAMA ARCADE—THE QUEEN OF POLAND—VISITS TO THE PAINTERS' STUDIOS—THE ABBÉ MORELLET—MADEMOISELLE LENORMAND—MADAME DE SOUZA AND THE LITTLE SORCERESS—THE PYTHONESS—AN EVENTFUL YOUTH—PROPHECY OF THE BIRTH OF COUNT MAURICE POTOCKI.

I HAD another aunt in Paris, Countess Mniszech, cousin-german to my mother, and a niece of our last king. She took up a great deal of my time. A good soul, but rather stupid and absurdly vain, she believed herself entitled to the prerogatives of *princesses of the blood,* and in this connection she had many unpleasant experiences. Neither the sad end of the last Polish king nor the dismemberment of our unhappy country had been able to cure her pretentiousness. The Empress of Russia, at the period when she lavished honours upon the Poles, had sent her the order of Saint Catherine. My aunt exhibited the medal on all great occasions, to such good effect that in Vienna she had been nicknamed *Countess Medal.* She was not in the least aware of how ridiculous she made herself. All she thought of was to uphold the dignity of her name by display. In Paris she had in her service the house steward of the unfortunate

Princess de Lamballe. Her secretary, M. de Ville, happened to be a *has been* whose quarterings, as incontestable as they were unknown, she thought lent a great deal of lustre to her establishment. She gave grand suppers, very tedious and splendid, to which she invited insignificant noblemen and obscure men of letters. So people made their escape as soon as civility permitted. She did not like that at all, because she thought it her duty to make her guests *talk*. Not knowing precisely how to go about attaining her object, she devised the plan of not having the tablecloth removed.

"The liveliest conversations," said she, "are held over a round table."

She had spent two years in France, and was thinking of departure; therefore before leaving the country of her predilection she wished to inspect everything that was pointed out to her as worth seeing.

The Panorama Arcade had recently been opened. It was fashionable to go shopping there. My aunt took her daughters; the youngest and cleverest of the Prince de Ligne's girls, Princess Flora, accompanied us. Our retinue was magnificent and numerous. We had two footmen, in scarlet livery, gold-laced on every seam, a negro, and a *chasseur*. People stood still in the street to see us pass.

The noble secretary followed in a small brougham, armed with a well-stuffed purse. When we had set foot on the ground we were surrounded by a swarm of street boys; at every shop we stopped at the crowd grew denser; they even climbed the balustrades to get a better view of us. My poor aunt, electrified by the effect she supposed she was producing, redoubled her extravagance, had the newest and most expensive things put aside, instructing M. de Ville *very loudly* not to *bargain*, this *plebeian* custom being odious to her. Turning to the Princess Flora, as well as to myself

and her daughters, she besought us to choose whatever we liked, and overwhelmed us with presents.

Less would have been enough to excite the curiosity of the common herd; soon the street urchins gave way to the Parisian idlers, who roam about incessantly, in order to let nothing escape them that may be related in a newspaper.

Without calculating the effect of a thoughtless word, it occurred to Princess Flora to say to some one staring over her shoulder:

"Do you know who that lady is? *She is the Queen of Poland.*"

At once this sentence spread from mouth to mouth; people jumped over the shop counter; we were mobbed, we were jostled, we were smothered; the confusion became indescribable and retreat impossible. Very luckily an honest tradesman, perceiving the uselessness of our servants' efforts to break a passage for us, opened a little secret door and thus gave us the possibility of flight. And my aunt, ignorant of Princess Flora's trick, went on repeating that *some people could not show themselves in public with impunity.*

Having once decided to see everything, we went through all the studios. The painters of interiors pleased me greatly. The details of their pictures were most graceful; but my father-in-law had taught me to admire none but the Italian school, and I was surprised that, with the finest models before them, the painters of the French school had made so little progress, or, rather, had made none at all. Nothing great, nothing noble was evident in the productions of the day. The young painters, to be sure, had fewer mannerisms than the Bouchers and the Vanloos, but they aimed neither at the exactness of Lesueur nor at the boldness of Poussin, nor at the colouring of Lebrun. You might have thought genius had gone out of fashion! The modern school affected a kind of scorn for these great masters.

David only proved himself a classic; however, his cadaverous colouring offset the correctness of the drawing; his pictures looked like bas-reliefs. The picture which, to my mind, will bestow immortality on David is that historical portrait of Napoleon ascending Mount Saint Bernard at the head of his army, which is seen in the defiles. *He sits composed on a restive horse.*

Girodet should have died after finishing his *Dido;* none of his works equals this little painting. Æneas, it is true, is rather wooden; he lacks animation; but you hardly look at him, so attractive is the group of two women.

Gérard has done some fine portraits; he excels in this line. But he lets himself be drawn into the painting of too many details; he defers too obligingly to the taste of the day, and paints cashmere shawls and transparent stockings too scrupulously. The richly embroidered lace trimmed court dresses, the corkscrew curls, the short waists, will make his works pass out of fashion. A clever painter must see to it that his portraits are paintings.

I was much astonished to find these gentlemen's studios heaped with canvases begun, knowing the enormous prices the painters of that period asked for their works. They were nearly always sketches from life, representing the imperial family or rich foreigners; the French did not permit themselves this expensive fancy.

Young women who recount their travels nearly all feel obliged to devote a chapter or two of *profound thoughts* to the progress of civilisation, to the sciences, etc. The greater part of these dissertations are extracted from a forgotten book, or they are gone over by some *scholar*, some *friend.* Sometimes one of the obscure writers is applied to, who provides copy at so much a page. As for myself, having resolved upon frankness in the strictest sense of the word, I must acknowledge that I did not seek the aid of men of letters. To estimate them at their right value it is enough

to judge them by what they furnish to the public. A single visit always seemed to me both useless and out of place. One should not go to a scholar as if he were a *curiosity*. This superficial way of arriving at a conclusion almost always has stupid conceit for its motive. Having returned home the person writes:

"Mr. So-and-So, well known through his distinguished works, received me most charmingly. We talked for more than an hour. He was astonished at the facility with which I expressed myself in his language, and advised me to write my memoirs. He is a man of unusual parts; he has plenty of wit and learning, etc.; and, in a word, he is one of those scholars you see only in France, and among the French, while elsewhere," etc., etc.

What took me aback was to see the celebrities of the day so rarely in society. Under a *levelling* king like Napoleon, who wanted every kind of merit to be honoured, it ought to have been commoner to meet artists and literary men in the saloons.

At Madame de Souza's I never saw but the Abbé Morellet. It was he, I think, who in the Revolution of 1789 saved himself from the lamp-post by a joke: *Will it make you see any better?* Already far advanced in years, he talked little, and only came to dine to satisfy a furious appetite. After dinner he took a nap. He snored for a good hour, and ended by waking himself up. I was then asked to take him to his door. I accepted the mission the more gladly as he lived near me. We habitually observed complete silence, but at the moment when my lackey threw back the curtain before the door the Abbé thought himself obliged to pay me a compliment, and, already on the carriage step, he turned round and said, in his nasal voice:

"I thank you, most amiable and lovely lady!" And I bade him good-night.

At these dinners, where we merrily talked about every-

thing, some one happened to mention Mlle. Lenormand in connection with the prophecy she had made the Empress Joséphine, a prophecy *half of which* was already fulfilled.

I manifested an eager desire to see this famous soothsayer, but my friends discouraged me by saying that her oracles were measured by the fee promised, and that the future, thus evaluated, was for sale at from twelve to thirty-six francs. Illusion could not withstand such a reality.

Mme. de Souza, who did not deny being very superstitious, told us she knew a fortune-teller much superior to Mlle. Lenormand. She had predicted wonderful things for her, she said. "If I were *not afraid* to repeat them," added Mme. de Souza, "you would be greatly surprised at them, for they are so improbable!"

One of the guests hazarded the question whether this fortune-teller had not announced the fall of the empire. Mme. de Souza only shook her head and said nothing. To cut short these indiscreet questions, she proposed to take me to the sorceress. I accepted the invitation eagerly, and the next day but one we put our plan into execution. We went on foot, at dusk, well bundled up and disguised. My guide went first, with great intrepidity, up four horribly steep flights of stairs. I followed rather timidly.

Hearing the noise we made, a youngish little woman came out to ask us what we wanted.

"It is I," said my companion; "I am bringing one of my relations, just come from the country, who desires to know what fate awaits her in Paris."

The little woman seemed to reflect. Not remembering Mme. de Souza, she excused herself.

"So many people come to me," she said, "that it is no wonder if I mistake faces; the more so as, no one wishing to give a name, there is nothing to aid my memory."

Delighted with this discreet beginning, we told her that

L'Abbé André Morellet.

From an engraving by Massol of the portrait.

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she had a right to forget the past, since she had the gift of looking into the future. This compliment did not seem to flatter her; I even believe she did not understand it, because her mind and speech were very simple.

In order to give me courage, my companion was the first to sit down at the magic table, and ask for the cards rather than the coffee strainer. I do not know why the little sorceress was interested in *surveying the past* instead of attending to the future. I have learnt *since* that Mme. de Souza had had an eventful youth; she was most seductive, and had not always been cold to the admiration her cleverness had brought her. The past was becoming shady; indiscreet revelations had to be stopped.

"You only have one son, and this son, whom you love tenderly, has just been in great danger," said the fortune-teller to my companion.

The poor mother could not restrain a cry of anguish. "Be comforted," added the woman; "he is safe! One might call it a miracle of Heaven! His is indeed a lucky star. I can tell you that the danger to which he was just now exposed was of no *human* doing. He fought against the elements. I cannot say whether it was fire or water; my cards say nothing positive enough about it; but do not be disturbed; you will learn all the details of the adventure from a widow among your friends, and your son was not alone in danger."

We looked at one another in silence. Not wishing to know any more, my companion obliged me to take her place. I cannot boast of not being frightened, but my mind was made up, and being decided upon shrinking from nothing, I asked for the cards and the strainer, while telling myself I should have to admit this infraction of the laws of the church to my confessor.

My past had so little in it! A quiet, pleasant life, duties

and affections over which the storm had thundered without, as yet, doing any harm. My two sweet children were in the front of this family picture. I had made it a condition that I was not to be told how long the beings that were dear to me were to live. After pondering a long time, and combining the cards with the strainer, the little sorceress assured me that my children's lot would be like my own. But I thought I perceived a sign of hesitation in her words, and that frightened me. Great temerity is needed not to be afraid to lift the kindly veil which conceals the future from us! Alas! it was proved to me but too well how much I ought to fear the future!

The woman probably noticed the distress I was in, for she said:

"Let us not speak of the children you have. Their destiny, I repeat, is not in any way extraordinary, but when you return to your country you will give birth to a son who will be heard from. I do not know exactly where you come from, or what your country is; but you certainly come from a *place* where peace never reigns, and I see wars and blood in my cards. Very well! This son, who will come into the world under the luckiest of constellations, will become the chief of a powerful party; perhaps he will even be king."

I laughed, and looked at Mme. de Souza, imagining she had prepared this mystification, and dictated all these foolish things. But she swore that she had not set foot in this house for over a year. The little woman, perceiving my suspicions, seemed sensitive to them, and, in order to lay more stress on her prophecies, she offered supposititious proofs by means of which I might have certainty as to their veracity.

"And," she continued, "I can assure you that this son will be endowed with what we call the *love of men.* In all

MLLE. LENORMAND, THE SOOTHSAYER.

From a lithograph of the drawing by Champagne.

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places, and at any age, he will be loved by old and young, poor and rich, by men almost as much as by women. His success will be irresistible, and will result chiefly from his good character."

These words remained graven in my memory, and I can state that the predictions were all realised.

When I left Paris I did not give this prophecy another thought. I had other joys and other sorrows. It was only at the moment my son came into the world that everything the little woman had said came back to my mind.

CHAPTER VIII

MALMAISON—THE AVOWAL

JOSÉPHINE — NAPOLEON'S BEDCHAMBER — JOSÉPHINE'S TASTE—THE PICTURE GALLERY—THE GARDENS AND THE HOTHOUSES—THE EMPEROR'S INVITATION—CONVERSATION WITH THE EMPEROR—NOTE FROM CHARLES DE F——T—EXPLANATION—AN OFFICER'S ROMANCE.

A FEW days after this expedition we went to see Malmaison. Joséphine had just gone to Switzerland. The emperor having paid numerous visits to the ex-empress, Marie-Louise took umbrage at it, and it was decided that Joséphine should take herself off at once. I had wished to be presented to her, but she never received strangers; she showed herself to none but those who, by constant devotion, had made themselves worthy of her confidence and affection. That poor heart was shrinking into itself. Joséphine was seeking solitude as much as she had loved the world. At Malmaison, at least, she was not persecuted by idle inquisitiveness; it was said she wept a great deal, and did not attempt to conceal her grief. Deeply attached to him, it was Napoleon she regretted far more sorrowfully than the brilliant position she had quitted.

Malmaison was shown us from roof to cellar. With what interest and eager curiosity we surveyed the spot, the

witness of such great events. So much love and so much fame! Fabulous tales, innumerable triumphs, unparalleled intoxications! All that drama of the hero's life unfolded itself there for ten years, and these still vibrant memories imparted to the present, as it were, the reflection of the past.

Napoleon's bedchamber, where, as first consul, he had already mused upon a world-empire, and where, yet later, as absolute monarch, his senses lulled by fame, he came for rest, is at this moment in the same state as when he left it, never to return. Joséphine had prohibited the door to the curious. It was only by force of gold and insistence that we were shown the room.

If ever a sacrilegious *fashion* dared to change the furniture of this room it would be a crime which posterity would have the right to lay at the door of the nation which did not prevent it. Malmaison ought to become a national possession.

And apart from the interest always attaching to the smallest details of a great man's life, this room is of itself one of the finest to be seen. The carved bedstead is of ancient form, simple and irreproachable; it stands on a platform covered with a tiger-skin of the greatest beauty. A spacious tent, supplying the place of curtains, is held up by trophies of arms which all recall a victory or signify a conquest. They are neither vain military trappings nor rich ornaments; they form a sort of talking chronicle, which tells the high deeds of the soldier as well as the fame of the warrior whose booty they were.

Everything that speaks to the imagination unconsciously inspires respect and reverence. While we were occupied in examining every detail of this once historical room, the silence was only interrupted by the custodian's voice, to whom we from time to time addressed questions.

About Joséphine's room there was nothing noticeable but

the little taste and harmony exhibited. The furniture is of all colours and all styles; it is an agglomeration of gewgaws, in which neither elegant simplicity nor artistic predilection is discoverable—no reminiscences; it is all yesterday's. Fashion, so mighty in Paris, here reigns supreme.

Only the picture gallery is beyond criticism. It is easily perceived that an artist gifted with taste and judgment had its supervision. The Flemish school there is by far superior to the Italian. Not wishing to enter upon one of those minute descriptions which always weary the ignorant and never satisfy the expert, I will confine myself to the observation that this gallery includes pictures by Claude Lorrain of the greatest beauty, a splendid Ruysdaël, several Paul Potters, and a number of delightful Wouvermans.

As for the architecture of the house, it is not only defective, but vulgar. A squashed, low, detached building, under a mansard roof; narrow little windows, mean doors, a few heavy decorations—in a word, paltriness without simplicity and pretentiousness without largeness.

The garden and notably the hothouses are admirable. There are so many rare plants from all parts of the world that it is easy to imagine one's self in the tropics.

If the huge cost is approximately evaluated of the establishment and maintenance of these gardens, no doubt is left of Joséphine's preference for plants and flowers among all the luxuries she surrounded herself with for ten years. Culture and dress were not neglected, but the empress's real passion was the love of her park and hothouses. How much this daintily adorned retreat must have added to the splendour of the festivities and to the romantic love-affairs of a brilliant court!

Returned home, I found an invitation which both surprised and flattered me. It was a letter from the chamberlain on duty, who informed me I had been nominated to

NAPOLEON AT MALMAISON.

From an engraving by Skelton.

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the honour of dining with Their Majesties that same day, at six o'clock; it was then ten. Nothing was rarer than such condescension, especially toward a stranger. Since his marriage the emperor followed the old etiquette of the French court, and only dined in the family circle. I promised myself faithfully not to allow my regrets to pass unobserved. Very luckily, the ball given by the minister of war would offer me the opportunity of *explaining*. I hoped that Napoleon, as was his wont, would deign to say a few words to me. So I took care to go to this party early, in order to get a good place. Wanting to make certain of attracting the emperor's attention, I took the precaution to put on all my diamonds, and to dress more showily than I had been in the habit of doing up to then—perhaps to make myself conspicuous. As I had foreseen, the emperor, having noticed me, took my direction, pretending a pout.

"*Ah! Madame la Comtesse,*" he said, "no doubt you got home very late yesterday; we had hoped to see you, and your place remained empty!"

Encouraged by this gracious reception, I tried to express the regret I had experienced in opening the letter which apprised me of everything I had lost by my absence. As he listened to me with a smile, I added that it would have been better if I had not come to Paris.

He let me talk, was amused at my disappointment, and ended in consoling me by saying, with charming good-humour, that I ought to know the old proverb: *adjourned is not forgotten,* and that another time *it would be thought of in season.*

This interview, which was long enough to arouse jealousy, gave rise to the most misplaced suggestions. More than one woman envied what she called my *position,* and many plotted in secret to gain the favour they pretended to despise.

During the next few days I received a number of visits; several persons who had never thought of doing me this civility came to leave their cards, and I told myself that in what was vile all courts were alike, the most modern and the most ancient. How far they were from suspecting what was occupying my mind! Once I had left the ball, I did not bestow another thought on this little triumph of vanity.

After his recovery Charles did not come to see me so often; he selected hours when I received indifferent people, being certain of not finding me alone. He nevertheless kept minutely informed of my doings; he had not left off directing my sightseeing. Here is the note he wrote me two days after the splendid Guards' ball, recorded by all the newspapers of the time:

"What were you doing last night? I had hoped to meet you at the Duchess de L——'s. You were going there; why did you not come? Fearing it might be too late, I did not venture to call upon you, or, if I may be frank, dreading to find you alone, I refrained. Will you allow me to escort you to-morrow morning to Gérard's? Everybody goes there to see Madame Walewska's portrait. It is only under such conditions that I want to meet you. However singular I may seem to you, withdraw neither your confidence nor your friendship from me. Bear with me and pity me. Could you guess how unhappy I am, you would understand that I am more than ever in need of your indulgent friendship and that I am worthy of your esteem."

There are moments in life when a word determines the future. These few lines brought on an explanation which both of us shrank from and avoided.

If M. de F—— had continued as attentive as in the past; if he had sought out every occasion to see me alone; if, in fact, I had thought suspicion of his schemes necessary, I should have been on my guard against him and myself.

But this persistence in shunning me, this unconquerable melancholy of whose cause I was ignorant, the mystery in which his feelings were enshrouded, and, more than anything, the prudence that guided all his actions, disturbed me still more than his past assiduities had. For the first time I dared to discover that I loved him, and I let him guess it. I cannot possibly remember the words I used, but apparently there was such an accent of truth in my answer, such poignant regret at having perhaps said too much, that Charles could not mistake my feelings, and the perfect knowledge he had of the straightforwardness of my character did me better service than all the arts of a coquette could have mustered for the occasion. In half an hour's time the following note reached me:

"Why have you written? You have succeeded in making me the most unhappy of men! I must positively speak with you; receive me alone this evening."

I was dumfounded. The thought of his happiness only had momentarily carried the day over the strictness of my principles, and over the firm resolve I had taken never to fail in my duty. At learning the futility of so great a sacrifice a deep despondency overtook me.

When, that evening, Charles sent in his name, he found me on the spot where I had read his answer, absorbed in meditation to the point of frightening him by my immobility. Sitting at my desk, I had mechanically taken up a penknife, and, without thinking, was cutting my glove. A little drop of blood brought me back from my dream, and struck terror into that heart so familiar with danger.

"What are you doing?" he cried, snatching the penknife from me. "Listen to me, for mercy's sake. Have pity on the state I am in. The time has come when honour imposes the cruel duty upon me of concealing nothing further from you. When I saw you in Poland I loved you with fervour

and devotion. Up till then I had been very light; to you it was reserved to bring about an entire change in me. I was often surprised at the sort of religion with which you inspired me, who know so little diffidence with women, and—I dared not let you divine my love! You were surrounded with such a halo of purity and innocence, I saw you so wrapped up in your child and so faithful to your obligations, that it seemed impossible, and so to speak criminal, to attempt to turn you away from the right path; moreover, you showed me such natural kindliness, such a confiding interest, that I went away persuaded my love had not even been suspected. In the presence of your husband I asked permission to write to you, and it was granted, for news from headquarters was welcome. A single word in one of your letters gave birth to a little hope in my heart! A woman had been mentioned who, so rumour said, had followed me to Germany; I thought to have observed that the absurd fiction had got to yourself; I even ventured to suppose you had been angered by it, and I so sincerely wished to explain matters that I applied to Marshal Davout for leave to go to Warsaw. If the leave was refused, I was determined to go secretly; but it was your sanction that I awaited. Alas! you must remember the bantering tone of your reply, and so I begged permission to return to France. Prince Murat did not forgive me for having left his staff, and for more than a year I was forgotten in a small German garrison. My mother wrote often, and comforted me as best she could; she repeated in all her letters that I must be patient, that a person whose good name was well established, and who loved me without my suspecting it, was taking steps to have me recalled. I actually, at last, received the order, or, more properly speaking, the permission to go back, signed by the emperor's own hand. My mind was made up to forget you, but being always haunted by your face, I involun-

tarily compared you with all the women I knew; your nature, your fascinating blitheness, that effusion so peculiar to Poles, and which particularly in yourself had seemed so entrancing, rendered the French women affected in my eyes and lacking in the individuality which multiplies the power to please and to conquer. One of them, however, and the only one whose name was to be kept from you forever, touched my heart while trying to conceal the passion I had evoked. It was of her that my mother spoke in all her letters. Not at all pretty, she believed herself condemned never to be loved, and did not even dare try to please; her steadfast and generous attachment was hidden from all eyes under the pretence of a purely fraternal liking.

"My dealings with her brother, who was my best friend, gave me opportunity to see her constantly. I watched her long before paying her back. She instilled neither the admiration which others had made me know at my entrance to society nor the exalted love that you alone had poured into my heart. I ended by loving her, for I had a thousand proofs of her devotion. The more I valued her, the unworthier it seemed to me to thwart her expectation. 'Yes,' she said, in her gentle voice, 'but if you could still love another woman, love as you loved in Poland, I feel I should die.' These few words made me sacrifice my liberty to her. For two years I consecrated my efforts to her happiness, and imagined I was happy myself at seeing with what gratitude she accepted my earnest affection. Your presence suddenly destroyed every illusion; the sight of you gave me back the strong emotions I believed destroyed forever. I felt myself reborn to hope, to joy; the absence of my friend, who had left a few days before your arrival, delivered me defenceless to the powerful temptation I was undergoing. But when I foresaw that you might be touched by so much love, and when I had seriously reviewed my position and

my conduct, the stern voice of honour made itself heard; I understood that my duty was to flee you! I have suffered and struggled much; above all, I wished you might preserve me your esteem. I know you too well, I rate you too highly, to venture to offer you a heart linked by *duty* to another life.

"You are so fit to be the sole object of my adoration that you can see another woman claim her share of my love without anger. If in Poland I had dared to hope that some day you might love me I would have forsaken all—my mother, my country, my friends. Your country would have become mine; I would have defended and served it with that enthusiasm which you only, a Pole, know how to inspire. I saw you besieged by admirers; you were equally amiable to them all; never did you encourage me to make an avowal. Now I have told you everything; I have done my duty. I have not deceived you by abusing your touching and generous confidence. Do not ask more! Beware of me and of my love. It is possible that, to be very sure of conquering, I ought to renounce the perilous felicity of constantly meeting you! But you have good sense enough for both; how should I find the courage to leave you when I think that perhaps fate will separate us forever? You will go back to your country, and I shall try to be killed on the first occasion that presents itself. Now you know," he added with a melancholy smile, "that the emperor does not spare us on those occasions. How, then, should I deprive myself of the sad pleasure which I still can relish for a little while? One condemned to death has in every country the right to dispose of his last moments."

I had listened to him in silence; it was late, and for the first time I saw him going without repining. My heart was ready to break! A torrent of tears at last gave me solace. As soon as I was able to reflect, I sounded the abyss on

whose edge I had been walking. In rendering acknowledgment to the scrupulous delicacy of him who had sustained me at the moment when I perhaps might have failed, I understood the whole extent of the danger I had escaped. Nevertheless, esteem and admiration enhanced a passion I could not exclude, and which for a long time after dominated all others. The picture of that mysterious woman, whom I always saw between him and me, was hateful to me! I decked her out in all the charms she perhaps did not own, and I was unable to admit that she might envy my lot, for, upon the whole, the most beloved was necessarily the least unhappy.

CHAPTER IX

THE DINNER AT SAINT-CLOUD

INVITATION TO SAINT-CLOUD—MADAME DE MONTEBELLO—MARIE-LOUISE—DRIVE IN THE PARK—THE EMPEROR'S BILL OF FARE—PRINCE EUGÈNE—THE KING OF HOLLAND'S ABDICATION—MARIE-LOUISE COAXES HER HUSBAND—RUMOURS OF WAR WITH RUSSIA—TALMA—LUNCHEON AT M. DE TALLEYRAND'S—FAREWELL TO CHARLES DE F——T—DEPARTURE.

HAD I followed my first impulse I should have left Paris on the spot, but I was delayed by the affair with which my husband's parents had entrusted me; it was a case of claiming an indemnity promised by the emperor in consideration of the huge losses the Count and Countess Stanislaus Potocki had sustained during the quartering of the French army on their estates in 1807.

Little given to solicitation of this kind, since I by nature felt repugnance towards any sort of transaction of which interest, however just, was the foundation, I had altogether neglected my mission, and it was only through remembering I was to render account of the result of my steps that I thought of it.

There came a second invitation to Saint-Cloud, *the day before the date* appointed in the letter; it was impossible to decline, and, moreover, the curiosity attaching to all that

could throw light on the private life of the great man became one of the most salutary diversions for me.

Court mourning was then being worn. I immediately sent to Madame Germont's, in order to have a dress appropriate to the event. She answered my lady's maid that, the emperor not caring for black, mourning of this class was worn all in white, especially in the country; that the *round* dress and the *fancy* headdress were adopted when one had the honour of being admitted to Their Majesties' intimate circle, and that I should have everything I wanted by noon.

At half past five I presented myself at the gate of Saint-Cloud. The sentinel making some difficulties about letting my carriage enter the court, the chamberlain on duty was kind enough to waive orders, and ushered me into the saloon. There I found the Duchess of Montebello, who, in her function of lady of the palace, did the honours rather coldly, as if to add to my embarrassment at meeting none of my acquaintances. It was her manner; she was so to every one, which did not prevent her having devoted friends and warm admirers, whom she owed as much to her beauty to the esteem she created in all who knew her.

The empress came in at six o'clock punctually, accompanied by her lady of the bedchamber, a *has been* whose name I forget. She was said to be fully versed in the ceremonial practised at the court of Louis XVI., a very choice merit at this season, because of the young sovereign.

Marie-Louise, dressed very simply, was wearing a white dress, with a black ribbon border at the bottom; this was the mourning which I have mentioned. Princess Borghese arrived a minute after, and also the emperor and the Duke of Wurtzburg, the empress' uncle, the same who had brought her to Paris. M. de Montalivet, Minister of the Interior, followed them. That was all! There was neither retinue nor parade—we were in *private*.

After speaking a few words to me, the emperor rang the bell and asked if the carriages were at the door. Upon the answer given him in the affirmative, he proposed a short drive in the park; he gave the empress his arm, and both got into a handsome calash to which, English fashion, six magnificent bays were harnessed, with three jockeys in green and gold livery.

We followed in a sort of pretty little six-seated open basket carriage. The Duke of Wurtzburg looked to be somewhat ill at ease, and proffered only a few words to the Princess Borghese, with whom he was supposed to be in love; he did not seem so the least bit in the world.

The silence was not interrupted but by the lamentations and sighs of the three ladies, who without their hats were exposed to the dust and the rays of the sun.

We thus, for a half hour, traversed all the avenues of the park, going at a fast trot the whole time.

I noticed, at the turns of the roads, where the pace necessarily slackened, individuals who, petitions in hand, made ready to throw them into the emperor's calash at a sign from him.

These drives were one of those fancies whose very slight agreeableness the emperor did not understand, and naturally no one dared to make the observation. When the calash stopped the front box was littered with petitions. The chamberlain on duty was ordered to hand them over to the principal secretary. I have since learnt that every morning Napoleon had an abstract of the petitions of the day before read him, and that himself dictated the answers.

After the drive, dinner being served, the emperor motioned to Marie-Louise to take her uncle's arm and to go into the dining-room; he followed them, and we entered also, excepting the lady of the bedchamber and the Duchess

THE PALACE OF SAINT-CLOUD.

From an engraving by Adlard of the picture by Allom.

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de Montebello, who to my great surprise passed into another room, where a table with thirty covers stood ready for the great officers, as well as the ladies on duty, to whom the Grand Marshal Duroc did the honours of the meal. While attending Their Majesties through the rooms, I saw Marshal Davout on duty that day as captain of the guard. I admit that it amused me to give him *a casual* little friendly nod, to pay him back for the royal airs he and his wife had put on in Poland.

The emperor's table was in the shape of an oblong. The empress and her uncle, both *dumb* figures, occupied one of the sides. Napoleon, opposite them, was between two *empty places.* The Princess Borghese and myself were at one end of the rectangle, and M. de Montalivet at the other. The emperor thus habitually had dinner at the table of the minister with whom he had been at work in the morning, in order to continue the conversation on subjects which, though of lesser importance, were nevertheless connected with the day's task.

We were at the close of the month of June; the sun was darting his rays through the foliage, but in spite of the brightness the candlesticks were all lit and the windows opened. This double daylight made a not at all pleasant result. It was a queer whim, was that. I was assured that the emperor never dined otherwise. A page stood behind his chair, a napkin in his hand; this page attempted to present a plate, but Napoleon would not allow it; a table officer-in-waiting performed that function.

The service proceeded with great rapidity. You would have said it was in the hands of sylphs, so deep was the silence.

Napoleon was in the habit of eating fast and very little; the plainest dishes were those he preferred. About the

middle of dinner a flat plate of *peppered* artichokes was offered the emperor: he laughed, and proposed to share his *modest* repast with us, eulogising this hermit's food highly. But as no one seemed tempted to partake of it, he ordered the plate to be put before him, and left not a scrap.

On the other hand, the empress, much engrossed by the dishes offered her, did not refuse one, and appeared annoyed at the rapidity with which they followed one another. Towards the end of the meal the emperor finally broke the silence, and, accosting M. de Montalivet, he questioned him as to the work undertaken at the palace of Versailles, the restoration of which had been begun.

"I wish," said he, "to entertain the Parisians as in days gone by—the fountains must play every Sunday. But is it true that under Louis XVI. that amusement cost a hundred thousand francs each time?"

Upon the minister's response in the affirmative, Napoleon exclaimed:

"It is a great deal for *going to see fountains.* Well! If I refuse the idlers of Paris this pleasure, who think more of amusement than of anything else, they will not understand that it is in order to make better use of such a large sum."

While speaking of the gardens of the royal residence, and of their size, he made an effort to recall the name of the famous Lenôtre, who had laid them out.

By a curious chance M. de Montalivet did not remember the name, and both were provoked without profit.

I ventured to whisper it into Princess Borghese's ear, who repeated it aloud.

"Ah!" said Napoleon, "that's not yours—not it! I would wager you did not know Lenôtre had ever existed—he did not die in your day!"

Then he threw me a charming look.

We were about to rise from table when the chamberlain came to apprise the emperor that the Viceroy of Italy was awaiting him in the gardens. He got up precipitately, without allowing Marie-Louise time to finish her ice, which so put her out that she could not desist from complaining of it to her uncle. Having returned to the drawing-room, whither the two ladies-in-waiting had preceded us, we found the large windows open; the view from them was down the chief avenue of the park.

Prince Eugène was walking up and down there in extreme agitation; as soon as Napoleon caught sight of him he went to meet him.

To judge by the vivacity of their conversation, their subject must have been a most serious one. The emperor gesticulated like a true Corsican; the prince seemed to try to pacify him; it was easily seen that Napoleon was not pleased. The voices reached us sometimes, but the wind scattered the words.

In the drawing-room the silence was only interrupted by some commonplaces which M. de Montalivet felt it incumbent to address us with, so as not to appear to be listening to the conversation which was taking place outside.

The empress proffered not a word; seated by her uncle, who encouraged her to absolute silence, she looked aimlessly out of the window, without paying the least attention to what was happening in the park, where the more and more heated conversation was still continuing.

As everything eventually became public—above all, at the court, where so many eyes and ears are open to see and hear everything—we learnt soon after what the reason of the storm had been.

The viceroy, commissioned by his brother, the King of

Holland, to announce his resignation of the throne to the emperor, had carried through his delicate mission, and had probably attempted to make excuses for his brother-in-law.

At last Napoleon entered the drawing-room; his face was stern, but calm; he went straight to M. de Montalivet and notified him that the next day, at five o'clock in the morning, he would repair to the Petit Trianon, and that arrangements were to be made for the young sovereign. Marie-Louise at once begged permission to be of the party, promising not to keep any one waiting, and to be ready at the hour mentioned.

The emperor declined, with kindness, alleging that, in the state she was in, every kind of exertion must be avoided. To lend weight to his refusal he consulted the Duchess of Montebello, who arrayed herself on his side. Marie-Louise, like a spoiled child, would still not take the refusal; she kept on insisting, stating that the doctor had ordered her to take exercise. While coaxing her husband in the hope of obtaining what she desired, she put her hand on his shoulder; this familiarity before others apparently displeased Napoleon. He gently removed his young wife's hand, not without having pressed it affectionately.

The emperor, having drawn me into the recess of a window, asked me what news I was in receipt of from Poland, and whether it was true that Emperor Alexander threatened those of his subjects with confiscation who did not return under his flag.

Having that morning received a letter from my father-in-law, I found occasion to confirm a fact which the emperor seemed inclined to doubt. I spoke of the necessity of hastening my return.

"Do not be alarmed," he said to me, with that gracious smile quite his own; "enjoy yourself, and do not think of packing up yet."

It was thus that haphazard phrases forewarned us of the war with Russia, of which no one as yet ventured to speak, but which every one looked upon as inevitable, seeing the tremendous preparations, whose object, however, was not divulged.

"What do you want me to bring you back from India?" one of the most conspicuous personages of the period asked me.

"From Moscow or St. Petersburg?" answered I, with the aim of probing his thoughts.

"Oh, we may possibly pass that way, but I imagine you would like some rarer booty. We have saluted the Pyramids; it would be the right thing now to go and see what our rivals beyond the sea are about."

Everything I now record will some day look as if borrowed from the "Arabian Nights' Tales," and yet I have made it a law to myself to swerve from the strictest truth in nothing; but people were so used to wonders that the marvellous seemed possible, and the impossible practicable.

I return to that day at Saint-Cloud, which takes up much room in my memory, and which concluded with a delightful performance. Talma played *Manlius*. It was truly the triumph of this admirable actor, who to the beauty of his voice joined nobility of pose and gesture, and a rare regularity of feature. When he wreathed his head with the laurel crown you would have said he was an ancient triumphator going to take his place in a chariot drawn by slaves. The actor was forgotten; only the hero was visible. What was extraordinary about him was his great resemblance to Napoleon, principally in profile. They might have been taken for two brothers; only their gaze differed: one was deep, the other of assumed gravity.

Paris rushed there in crowds. The theatre was not spacious; a thousand intrigues were woven to obtain a seat.

The emperor himself disposed of the boxes; the tickets for the floor and balconies were distributed by the high officers of the court. My ticket admitted me to the foreign ministers' box, immediately adjoining the imperial box. Two equally interesting performances were thus to be enjoyed at the same time.

Napoleon, who loved fine verse, at times appeared desirous of making the young empress share in his enthusiasm, if not in his satisfaction. Sitting rigid in her armchair with gilded eagles, she let her eyes wander about the theatre, only turning them upon the stage for short intervals, and when she was, so to speak, forced to it by the emperor's applause. He supported the *apathetic* indifference of his companion with exceptional patience.

The piece over, about eleven o'clock, Their Majesties bowed to us and retired.

At once the road to Paris, gorgeously lighted, shook under the swift course of the carriages of all who had seen this doubly royal play, so perfect was Talma's acting. Thus ended that brilliant day, which had as its sequel the most absurd occurrences.

M. de Talleyrand, who had not thought of calling upon me, and who up to then had deemed it sufficient to deposit a card with my porter, came the next day in quest of details of the dinner of the day before. He questioned me most adroitly on what I had seen and heard; I limited myself to telling him what he very probably already knew. Contrary to his habit, he was extremely amiable; he spoke in terms of high eulogy of Poland, and finally requested my company at lunch in his library. I eagerly accepted the invitation, and, as it is my purpose never to say anything but the truth, I must admit that I never spent a morning more delightfully. M. de Talleyrand did the honours of his curiosities. It was natural to find the handsomest and rarest editions collected

by a fancier worth millions. However, nothing was comparable to the way he showed his books; he never said anything one might possibly know, nor anything that others had already said or written; he talked very little about himself and a great deal about the distinguished people with whom he had relations. In a word, he was as well informed as a grandee who devotes a lot of time to his pleasures could be. To complete this flattering picture, which yet does not flatter, I will say that M. de Talleyrand possessed the miraculous art of momentarily throwing his past into oblivion when he spoke of the present.

My door was besieged by visitors of all kinds. The finest mansions were offered me, it being supposed I should never leave Paris again. There were even persons who dared to counsel me not to *refuse* what they called *a signal favour.* I there saw laid bare all the baseness and corruption of the courtiers. What would they have thought had they been able to read my heart, and to see with what joy I would have exchanged the position they assigned me for an obscure life —like that which I had been leading for some months!

Charles de F—— came to bid me farewell at the moment I least expected it. Quite approving the view I had taken, he suffered from it, and with difficulty forgave me what he called an *excess of goodness.* Too perspicacious, however, not to guess and understand what it cost me to resist the liking he had inspired me with, he vowed an esteem and an attachment to me upon which I shall count my life long. I found myself free, at parting, to give him my portrait, with this motto, borrowed from the poem by Legouvé:

She is less than a mistress, and much more than a friend.

The thud of the knocker falling on the door of my house as he left it for the last time long resounded in my ears! I heard it in my dreams; I awoke at it with a start! Time only quieted that painful feeling; it was but by degrees, when I

was back with my children, that the sentiment of respect and gratitude dedicated to my friend, which had given me up to the most sacred duties, conquered memories at once sad and sweet.

I left Paris without reluctance; that town had witnessed my first sorrows—sorrows that one considers *misfortunes* before one has experienced worse, irreparable.

Part the Fourth

THE GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW

CHAPTER I

BIGNON

1811-1812

BIRTH OF COUNT MAURICE POTOCKI—THE COURT OF FREDERIC AUGUSTUS—M. DE SERRA—PRINCE JOSEPH PONIATOWSKI—BIRTH OF THE KING OF ROME—ENTHUSIASM OF THE POLES—PRINCE PONIATOWSKI GOES TO PARIS—PAULINE BORGHESE—M. BIGNON.

A GREAT joy came to me in the course of the winter, and that joy caused me to lose sight, for a moment, of political occurrences. The 13th of January (1812), at seven o'clock in the morning, I brought the son into the world who had been announced to me by the little soothsayer. He was born under the circumstances predicted.

For the first time in my life I experienced the desire of having a royal godfather for one of my children! I entertained the flattering idea of asking this favour of the great Napoleon, who was to *resuscitate Poland.*

I therefore merely gave my son a private baptism, and he received the name—I hardly know why—of Maurice. Dear child, how pretty and good you were! Neither tears nor screams ever disfigured your fresh, chubby face; you were your mother's love and the delight of the house; you were

adored by every one. I still have to thank you for the happiness you gave me.

When I returned to Poland we belonged to the King of Saxony, to whom Napoleon had given us, or rather, annexed us, scarcely knowing how to dispose of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, which he had *casually* organised, leaving the care of its advancement to time and events.

This creation of the Duchy of Warsaw was our bright star of hope.

In *default of a better,* we had a sovereign of rare goodness, who concerned himself about his country's welfare with a wise and paternal solicitude. The king and queen, already advanced in years, were, in truth, surrounded by a court nearly as somnolent and superannuated as that in Beauty and the Beast. You would have said all the wheels had stopped a hundred years ago. At this court at least sound principles were to be found, a disinterestedness which did not quite belong to the age, and manners that were cultivated and elaborate to excess.

The form of government instituted by Napoleon very closely resembled that of all the Rhenish countries. We had a council, composed of seven ministers and a president. This heptarchy, to all appearances entirely national, was in reality subject to the influence of the French resident, a veritable proconsul, who exercised an almost boundless power. But in exceptional cases it was allowable to appeal to the emperor himself through the agency of the ministerial secretary of state resident, attached to the crown, and *solely* charged with matters relating to the grand duchy.

At the time of my arrival the French resident was M. de Serra, a Genoese nobleman, rather stiff and narrow, a great Latinist, according to scholars, but only little versed in the art of conversation, possessing neither the qualities nor the faults peculiar to the nation he represented. He was universally esteemed, but not liked. Bitter in argument, he

brought the iron will to bear on it which he had been advised to assume as a means of success in the service of an absolute master. Often my father-in-law, who was President of the Council, came back from a meeting in despair over the demands of M. de Serra. In vain the attempt was made to demonstrate to him that the country, drained by the expenditures forced upon it through the long stay of the army, was now empty of resources. He would listen to nothing; he answered objections by saying: *"It must be done nevertheless, gentlemen, and it will be, for the emperor demands it."* In sheer hopelessness we addressed ourselves to the supreme master, who caused some funds to be advanced, and ordered the resident to temporise, without however yielding.

At the bottom of his heart, M. de Serra did not like Napoleon. He sometimes disclosed his feelings to those of the ministers of whose discretion he was certain, but these sentiments in no wise diminished the zeal he applied to the execution of the orders sent from Paris.

The emperor had restored us our national flag, our language, our institutions, and our army, whose commander was Prince Poniatowski. Never was a man worthier than Prince Joseph to lead the fifty thousand braves who were already serving under him. Worshipped by the soldiers, whose perils and fatigues he shared, he could obtain from them at the slightest sign what others secured by means of severe discipline.

His character presented curious contrasts. Suppressed at home, and gladly yielding for peace's sake, when necessary he found the virile energy required by the many difficulties besetting his path through life. From that moment the private individual disappeared, and made room for the public man, wholly devoted to the honour of his country. What was most astounding in this mixture of heroism and debility was that selfishness was never the motive of any of his actions; no man was ever more free from *vanity*. Per-

haps history may even reproach him for the entire absence of that imperfection; the exceptional position in which he was placed might have urged him to aspire to the throne, and thus assure his country's welfare. Yet his noble sentiments, his splendid valour, and his glorious death have made a hero of him whose sacred name will remain dear to his fatherland forever.

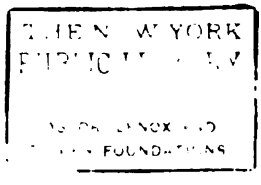
The letters from Paris contained nothing but accounts of the gorgeous festivities held on the occasion of the young sovereign's confinement, who, in bringing the earnestly wished-for son into the world, had fulfilled her husband's hopes, and firmly established the imperial throne. That, surely, was the most brilliant epoch of Napoleon's career; every one about him reflected, so to speak, his good fortune. There were nothing but parties and fancy-dress balls, to which all the gods of Olympus found themselves invited. The Queen of Naples appeared as Minerva, and her sister, the lovely Pauline, as Venus.

For a long time the army had not enjoyed such a prolonged truce. The presence of all this brilliant youth, eager for pleasure as well as for rest, lent the festivities of all kinds a new lustre. But in the midst of this general intoxication mysterious utterances were heard, and there began to be no further doubt of war—of that war in which Napoleon was to lose his name and his empire, and which he wanted, like Xerxes, to conduct at the head of a hundred different peoples. The time was consumed in diplomatic negotiations.

Napoleon insisted that the Emperor Alexander sacrifice England to him. While gauging the danger of opposition, that prince could not resolve upon a change of policy, and temporised, assisted by the conciliating spirit of M. de Caulaincourt, the French Ambassador, who, greatly taken with the noble character of the autocrat, and the confidence he displayed in him, held back his master's thunderbolts.

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS, KING OF SAXONY.

From an engraving by Mechel of Graff's painting in 1790.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Prince Poniatowski, sent by the King of Saxony and the government to express to the Emperor Napoleon the share of rejoicing the nation took in the birth of this ardently longed-for heir, brought back *nothing positive* from Paris on the subject of the war. The court was engaged in festivities, and if some sad minds predicted an enterprise as perilous as it would be gigantic, they were not listened to, for the emperor was still silent. The prince was received with rare civility; he was given a most flattering reception. His handsome and noble figure brought him all manner of successes; the adorable Pauline did not show herself indifferent to the hero, and he was able to inscribe another victory in the notebook of his gallantry.

All of a sudden M. de Serra was ordered to Dresden, and was replaced in Warsaw by M. Bignon. We never knew the reason of this change, and M. de Serra himself claimed not to know; however that may be, death was awaiting him at Dresden. M. Bignon took his place to the great satisfaction of the council, seeing that he understood things better, and was not so desirous of pleasing the master.

As to society, it was less delighted; we did not know how to value the new envoy as he deserved. But M. Bignon, too, would wear a mask at pleasure, and it would have been very hard to suspect, under this middle-class, common exterior, the superiority and talents of which he afterwards gave astonishing proofs.

Condemned by his position to keep open house, he did the honours at home in a very awkward way. I must reproach myself with having laughed at it more than once.

He dished us up one single, solitary sentence, which he modulated in all tones, probably supposing it to be within our reach more than any other. It was always:

"Is it possible that you are in this little corner? Who would have thought you would take such a bad place as this

little corner! Since I find you in this little corner, may I be permitted to come and share your isolation occasionally? Ah, there you are in your little corner! How wrong to hide like this! You have chosen that place to make your little observations, and to make fun of us from that little corner!"

And whether you were in the very midst of the most brilliant circle, or on the solitary sofa of a German dowager, everything became the "little corner" for M. Bignon! If sometimes the avocations of master of the house left him no time to deliver himself of long periphrases, in *passing* he would let fall a bantering or respectful word, according to the person.

But who would have thought that, a few years later, this extremely limited person was to become the most convincing orator, one of the most distinguished publicists, the writer to whom Napoleon was one day to confide the task of transmitting his wonderful history to posterity? Who would have thought then that M. Bignon was a superior man, whose speeches in Parliament would justly be the admiration of his countrymen? Who would have thought he would with such eloquence defend the sacred cause we were pleading before the tribunal of Europe, and that his noble example would arouse countless emulators?

If the lightness of our judgment sometimes makes us unjust, it never makes us ungrateful, and M. Bignon has left imperishable gratitude in the hearts of the Poles. I admit, that from my point of view the change seemed extraordinary. I learnt, on this occasion, that one must beware of judging a statesman in a *saloon*, particularly if he was not born there. That was the secret of M. Bignon's vulgarity. In the council he was preferred to the *noble* M. de Serra, although his great merits were far from being recognised.

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARIES TO THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

1812

DECLARATION OF WAR—THE POLISH ARMY—NAPOLEON AND FRANCIS AT DRESDEN—MARIE-LOUISE AND BEATRICE D'ESTE—THE CONFEDERATE DIET—THE ARCHBISHOP OF MALINES—THE DUKE DE BROGLIE—M. D'ANDRÉ—THE AMBASSADOR'S AVARICE—PRINCE CZARTORYSKI, MARSHAL OF THE DIET—MATUSZEWICZ—PRINCE ADAM—PRINCE CZARTORYSKI'S SPEECH—THE COCKADES.

In the spring of 1812 war was at length declared, and we saw Europe shake under the victorious eagles of Napoleon. Counting the nations that marched behind the French standards, the most skeptical did not venture to doubt the success of this audacious undertaking. Who could resist such numbers, commanded by such a man? And the Poles hoped to see their country born anew to greatness and power, as, in fact, it ought to have been, to fight the enemies of its liberator and form the bulwark of civilisation. A word from him who ruled the destinies of the world would have tripled our strength, insured his victory, or at least covered his retreat. Why did he not speak that magic word, which, guaranteeing us our safety, would have spared him unnamable disaster?

As soon as the news of the war was noised about the coun-

try, the young men ran to arms from every side, even before being called out. Neither Russia's threats nor the reasoning and fears of parents were able to stanch this patriotic rush; it was the same enthusiasm and the same devotion as in 1806, but there was one degree more of confidence.

A new generation took the place of that which, in part, had disappeared from the ranks of the French army. Children listened with feverish curiosity to the tales of their elders, and burned with martial ardour. The hope of returning victorious urged them to heroic deeds. Soldiers scarcely adult were the admiration of old grenadiers. Those who wore no uniform did not dare show themselves in the streets, for they risked being insulted by the street-boys.

I am not very old yet, and three times have I already seen these wonders of heroism occur! In the space of forty years we made these generous efforts three times, all the worthier of admiration since among sober people few illusions and little hope prevailed.

Napoleon left Paris the 10th of December in the company of Marie-Louise, who wanted to take him back as far as Dresden. Emperor Francis joined them there, also accompanied by his young spouse, Beatrice of Este, the last scion of that illustrious race to which so many historical traditions and romantic memories attach. This princess, sacrificed as those usually are whose fate is regulated by politics, was neither known nor appreciated in the court where she soon faded away *for want of air*.

On the occasion of this meeting a rivalry was established between the empresses. Marie-Louise was unable to comprehend any kind of greatness but her own splendid position; she tried to crush her mother-in-law with her magnificence, and overwhelm her with the costliest presents. But Austrian pride would not brook it; the two princesses left each other with a coldness between them.

Marie-Louise shed floods of tears at separating from her husband. You would have said she had a presentiment that this farewell was to be the *last*, and that henceforth history would only mention her name with the displeasure her wretched behaviour drew upon her. It was never known *exactly* what passed between the two monarchs, but by the manner in which Napoleon left his father-in-law the hope was allowable that they had entered upon an offensive and defensive alliance.

An adept at playing upon the passions which were to serve his purpose, the emperor neglected nothing which might flatter the Poles and carry their enthusiasm to the utmost limits of the *possible;* he, however, allowed them to *hope for everything* without ever committing himself by hasty promises. M. de Bignon was ordered to inquire minutely into *national traditions,* and to ascertain in what way *popular uprisings* had formerly been brought about at the approach of an enemy.

For this purpose a *confederate diet* was convoked, and an ambassador was sent us from France, whose duty it was to watch what happened at important junctures.

All of these demonstrations had the object of frightening Russia, by making the echo of our hopes heard in the remotest provinces she had captured from us.

We saw M. de Pradt arrive, with all the pomp befitting the representative of a great nation and a powerful monarch.

But how small and vulgar he appeared to us in the midst of the glories in which he rejoiced in a haughty, and at the same time sordid, manner! Talking incessantly of his household affairs, of his cook, whom he was going to send for, "seeing she was economical and accomplished," scolding all his servants aloud, going to see his horses groomed, jabbering incessantly, untiringly telling anecdotes everybody knew, affecting a laugh at noble and enthusiastic sentiments

he did not understand, deficient in dignity of deportment and in tactfulness of discourse—such was M. de Pradt.

In any other country, and above all under other conditions, he would have proved a complete failure; but the Poles saw in Monsignor the Archbishop of Malines only him who sent him, him whose mighty arm alone could help Poland to lift herself up again. We were, however, none the less surprised at this choice, which nothing justified, not even politeness. M. de Pradt was so entirely unfit to manage anything whatever, that he relied completely on a certain M. d'André. He was only to be met at the ambassador's great dinners, where, humbly seated at the bottom of the table, he kept his capabilities and his influence hidden. Nevertheless his expressive and vivacious countenance was ill designed to conceal the unpleasant impression that the host's merrymakers created in him, who (the host) sometimes gave vent to a joviality befitting neither his age nor his station. The worse the ambassador seemed to us suited for the mission entrusted to him, the better was the make-up of the embassy. Among the most noticeable of these gentlemen, I will mention the Duke de Broglie, still very young, but who, from his very habit of eyeglassing his foot, already exhibited striking talents, and who enjoyed a sound education combined with an upright character; also M. de Brévannes, a man of infinite wit and good sense, faculties rarely found in company. He was suffering from aneurism at an advanced stage; his health often made him gloomy and meditative, but from the moment his disease gave him a truce, his sallies amused the whole room. I have scarcely ever met a man so *quietly* affable and witty. There was also M. de Panat, a little too much taken up with his own very small person and importance, but by no means deficient in parts and adroitness. He was, I believe, the labourer of the party. And finally there was that good and worthy M. de

Rumigny, dear to the memory of all who knew him, and who, later, as Ambassador to Switzerland, proved the protector of all Poles who were unfortunate.

The arrangements in the Brühl Palace, which had been offered the ambassador, were not entirely completed, for there was as much care as expense being lavished on it. M. de Pradt, unwilling to remain in the hotel he had come to, knew not where to lodge. To hire a convenient apartment temporarily did not suit My Lord; he was economical, and quite determined to put aside all he could save out of the two hundred thousand francs fixed by the emperor as the cost of representing him. Seeing him wrapped up in such wretched concerns while events were complicating more and more and claimed the ambassador's full attention, my father-in-law concluded to offer him the apartment Prince Murat had occupied. It was thus we became acquainted with the thousand pettinesses that made up his life, and it was thus we learnt to judge him.

The Polish army, already up to its full complement, thanks to the ardour with which it had been organised, received marching orders. It started, including the most brilliant youth in its ranks; not one historic name was missing at the roll-call.

We were all confident of the success of the enterprise. But too many private misfortunes were to be dreaded to render possible the absence of cruel fears; we knew that all were going into the teeth of danger, led by a chief who would be their example in temerity.

All measures having been taken, the emperor announced that he wished to see old Prince Czartoryski, Prince Adam's father, promoted to the dignity of Marshal of the Diet.

Matuszewicz, Minister of the Interior, a man of infinite cleverness and ability, who owed the old prince everything, repaired to Pulawy to persuade his protector not to refuse to

associate his revered name with this most important event. People spoke of the effect which would be produced all over the country by seeing, at the head of the signatures affixed to the Federal Act, the signature of a universally respected old man, whose great fortune, age, and social standing made him a sort of patriarch, and with whom our oldest traditions were connected.

They who knew the emperor's innermost thoughts asserted that, if Napoleon attached such great importance to the nomination, it was because of his intention to put up the father's name against the son's. Bound to the Czar by a deep affection, seduced by promises which then perhaps were not illusive, Prince Adam was expecting from Alexander the same Poland that we thought only to gain by the victorious arms of the Emperor of the French. Ardently pursuing this chimera, the sole passion of his noble life, Adam Czartoryski served the autocrat faithfully, and declined to see in Napoleon's demonstrations anything but the means suitable for favouring ambitious plans.

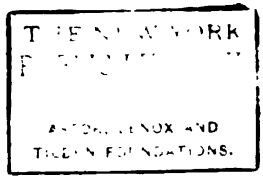
I shall never forget how, one day, after discussing these two opinions at length, of which one had become a *conviction* with him, while the other was my own hope founded on the public interest, he exclaimed, with the most generous enthusiasm:

"If the future should prove my distrust culpable, I would submit to banishment from our fatherland, which we should owe to the victor's magnanimity, without a murmur; I would raise altars to him in the very desert to which he had exiled me, to punish myself for believing in Alexander's promises."

The old prince, not sharing his son's views, or, more properly speaking, having no fixed opinions of his own on account of his advanced years and enfeebled faculties, ended

M. DE PRADT.

From a very scarce engraving.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by yielding to the earnest solicitations of Matuszewicz, and came to Warsaw, to step into the high place offered him.

Owing to unpardonable imprudence he was not prevented from appearing in his Austrian field marshal's uniform, the uniform he habitually wore. The sight of these foreign colours in the midst of an assembly of patriots with reason shocked the representatives of the country. The honour of his name and white hair diminished considerably in this dress, which recalled but too well just grievances against Austria, since the First Partition, and since Maria Theresa's violent spoliation.

Unfortunately this was not the only fault the worthy old man was guilty of. The day of the opening of the Diet he mixed his speech with a tincture of superannuated chivalry which the place and the circumstances repudiated.

After beginning with an eloquent appeal to the noblest sentiments, to the most heroic devotion, to the most thorough spirit of sacrifice, he addressed the ladies filling the galleries; he spoke of the patriotism which wives, mothers, and sisters ought to give proof of. The old princess and her daughters were in the place. They answered with cheers and oaths that went very near to the ridiculous. Cockades of the national colours, ready beforehand, were thrown and distributed among the whole audience. Several of these cockades were sent to headquarters by the courier whom the ambassador immediately despatched, to notify the emperor of the effect produced by the opening of the Diet.

This gallantry, which partook of memories of the past, and this feminine patriotism, in a parliamentary chamber, could not but seem out of place, and sensible people regretted it. The prince, with his name and his eighty years, would have made a sensation in far greater harmony with the cir-

cumstances if, calling the Poles *to arms,* he had been satisfied to show them the new road lying open before them; there, neither theatrical emotion nor noisy demonstrations were wanted. Nothing is so apt to move men as elevated and deep sentiments simply expressed.

The ambassador answered the marshal's discourse with such ambiguous diplomacy, that to be understood his reply would have needed *explanation,* and, as it happens in such cases, every one interpreted it after his own fashion; people were only agreed on one point, which was, that the emperor was still unwilling to commit himself to anything.

CHAPTER III

DE PRADT

1812

SMOLENSK—DEATH OF COUNT GRABOWSKI—THE FRENCH EMBASSY—THE KING OF WESTPHALIA AT WARSAW—MADAME WALEWSKA AT DE PRADT'S—DINNER IN THE COUNTRY—THE GNATS—M. DE BRÉVANNES' IMPROMPTU—THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESENT.

NAPOLEON penetrated as far as Wilna without meeting the least resistance; he ought to have guessed that the enemy wished to draw him into the heart of Russia. He made a stay of a few days in the capital of Lithuania, and organised a provisional government there like that of the grand duchy. M. Bignon was entrusted with the direction of this new embassy. From Wilna, Napoleon marched upon Smolensk, having echeloned his huge army.

After every passage of a river the ambassador received the post which was to bear the bulletin to Paris for the *Moniteur,* and communicated the news to us. The public greeted the tidings with rapture, the town was gaily illuminated, and crowds rushed for particulars, which had the liveliest interest for every one of those who had relations or friends with the army.

The first important bulletin announced the taking of Smolensk, the assault of which the emperor had led in person. The Poles there performed, as they did everywhere, prodigies of valour. At Smolensk the victorious army was on the border of the former Poland; it looked as though the chief difficulties had been overcome. The *Te Deum* was sung in all the churches; but the intoxication of victory having made room for the most natural alarms, inquiries were made about the inevitable losses to be mourned. The heroic death of General Michael Grabowski, killed at the moment when, at the head of his brigade, he dashed *first* on the ramparts of the town, called forth the deepest sorrow, and for the moment interrupted the demonstrations of joy. He was one of those men who, though young, earn every one's attachment. He was my friend Madame de Sobolewska's brother; I saw him often. His poor sister persisted in disbelieving her misfortune, for the general's body had not been found; for a long time she thought her brother had been taken prisoner.

No sooner had the ambassador installed himself in the Brühl Palace, which had then been handsomely refurnished for him, than he announced his intention of receiving once a week, and letting the young people dance. But to this project a great difficulty was opposed: excepting the young men of the embassy, there was not a single person in the whole town of the *right age* to waltz: they were all with the army! So we had to relinquish this form of amusement. Moreover, the ladies living in retirement in the surrounding country were not in the humour to yield to the pressing invitations of His Eminence, as they were anxiously awaiting news from headquarters.

The first parties at the embassy, too, were sad and dreary; it was a desert. We heard that the emperor had detailed accounts rendered him of everything that happened at War-

saw; it was said that he would not fail to be shocked at demonstrations of sadness—at bottom perhaps justified, but misplaced considering the pleasant arrangements made for us—and so the ladies were obliged to show themselves from time to time.

The arrival of the young King of Westphalia (Jérome Bonaparte) put a little life into the town. He commanded a reserve corps; he had been ordered to join the emperor, but, not being able to make his troops move as quickly as his court, he was compelled to stop at Warsaw. It was even said that, being easily pleased with the creatures he made his intimates, and feeling so much at home in a country where the beauty of the women is neither rare nor forbidding, the ambassador one day got orders to make him leave. At least he played the king on arriving; announced a function, and said he would receive the ladies desirous of being presented to him. This seemed entirely out of place in a sovereign of twenty, who happened to be passing through, and played at reigning as children play at being lady.

There was thus a schism; some went, the greater number revolted against the ambassador's insinuations, who maintained that *Napoleon's brother could be refused nothing.* The prince was offended at the lack of enthusiasm expressed by the ladies; he tried to give a ball, but the same obstacles which had hindered M. de Pradt presented themselves.

The entertainments were restricted to rather tedious dinners; etiquette, observed with special rigour, excluded the agreeable men whose social position did not allow them to *sit down* in the king's presence.

We could not reconcile ourselves, we Poles, to these imperial exigencies—our habits were too republican.

Jérome has been wrongly accused of being without advantages; he had a quick and just mind. With a touch more of the legitimate sovereign, and one less of puerile

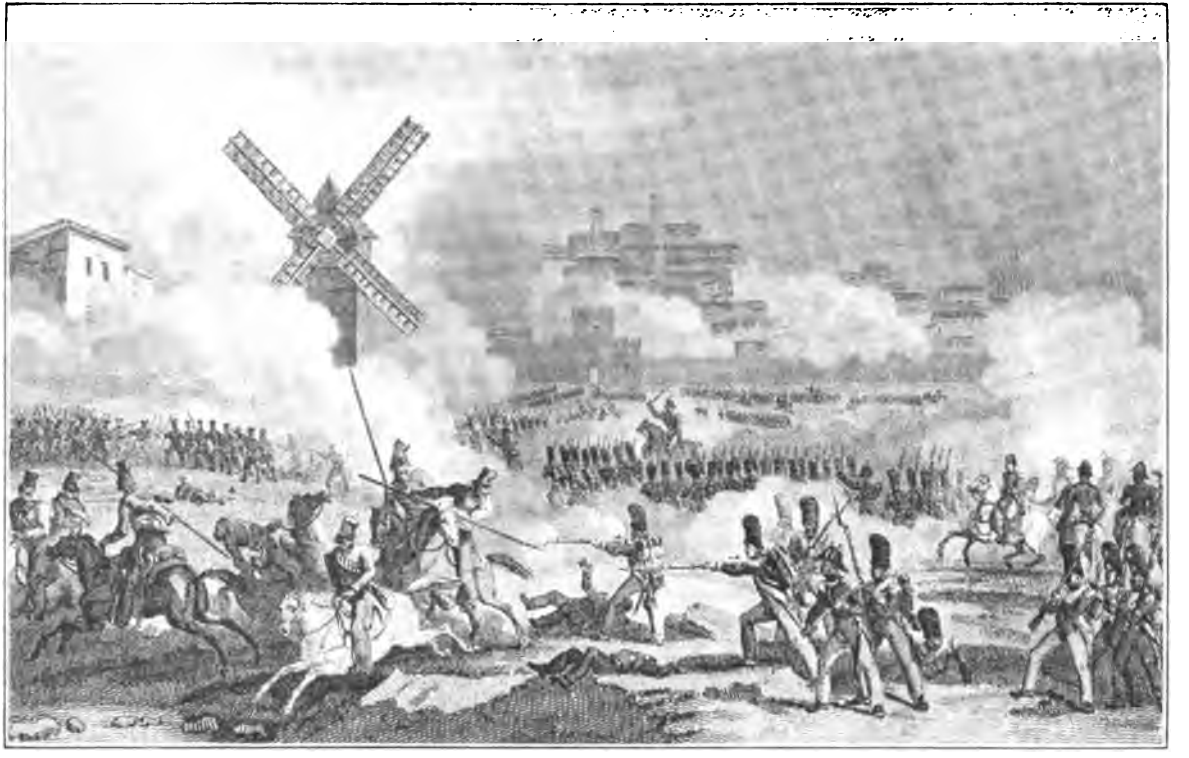
vanity, he might have passed for a distinguished prince; but, being a spoilt child of fortune, he used and abused her bounty. It was the history of nearly all the members of that family. Each of them, taken *individually,* possessed incontestable qualities, but the greatness of Napoleon overshadowed them. None but absurdities were told about this young king's habits. It was stated that every morning he took a rum bath, and every evening a milk bath. His servants, they said, put the liquor in bottles and sold it at a rebate.

He pushed elegance so far that he never wore certain of his clothes twice, so much so that a Parisian hatter, whom he owed a considerable sum, brought a most unpleasant suit against him. The emperor would never hear of his brother's debts—and a little King of Westphalia was hardly free to do things so grandly without making trouble for his budget.

I believe that at the embassy they were *relieved* to see him go at last; but another visit occurred which fully exposed the ambassador's want of tact.

Madame Walewska, urging as a pretext family affairs which demanded her presence, arrived at Warsaw in the course of the summer. Nobody was deceived by this subterfuge. As she had never given much attention to her private affairs, and as her small country-seat was in the hands of a steward, it was easy to divine that the hope of being called to headquarters was the real motive of the journey. But since his marriage Napoleon had avoided every appearance of fickleness.

During the few days the fair one passed at Warsaw, Monsignor looked upon it as his *duty* to treat her as the fac-simile of an empress. She had the preference over all the ladies. At grand dinners she was always served *first,* occupied the seat of honour, and recieved all the homage and



THE TAKING OF SMOLENSK.

From an engraving by Couché fils.

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marks of respect. This visibly shocked the elderly dames and irritated their husbands, while the young women, careless of etiquette, laughed frankly over the amorous ecstasy with which Monsignor the Archbishop eyeglassed the little countess' pretty arm and plump white hand.

She had developed exceedingly during her sojourn in France. She had there acquired a sort *of modest self-assurance* difficult to maintain in her equivocal position. Being obliged to circumvent Marie-Louise, who was supposed to be very jealous, Madame Walewska found a way, in Paris itself, to have doubts cast on the continuation of the secret relations she was entertaining with the emperor. And this is the only one of Napoleon's love affairs which was lasting. At the moment his fortunes ceased Madame Walewska felt at liberty to unmask, and followed the emperor to the Island of Elba; but he reproved this step, and the friend who was true in misfortune found herself removed, out of consideration for the unfaithful wife.

M. de Pradt's too indiscreet attentions were the fault of the fair one's abrupt departure from Warsaw; she was evidently embarrassed, and preferred to shut herself up in her little house, where she awaited the issue of events.

My husband, following the general movement, had gone to Wilna, where he had an office in the provisional government newly organised by the emperor. During this time I remained at Natoline with my children, and busied myself with arranging that delightful seat.

M. de Pradt, wishing to judge for himself of this country house he had heard me speak of, wrote to me, to be *asked* to dinner. I was the more surprised at this *cordiality* and absence of ceremony, as I had done nothing to provoke such an *invitation;* I however answered as it behooved me. So we saw his ambassadorship arrive, drawn by fat jennets.

The day was very hot, and M. de Pradt very tired. As soon as he was a little rested he took up his chapter of ancient anecdotes, the newest of which dated from Madame de Pompadour, the journeys to Marly, etc. He only stopped talking when we went into the dining-room. But there again we had to submit to long dissertations on every course. He was astonished at such good cooking in Poland, and he said so much about it, that I told him my head cook was a *Frenchman!* His surprise was tremendous—he never stopped overwhelming me with questions. His name? His birthplace? The school he had been brought up at? I knew nothing of these details, and I had a notion of sending for the artist himself. The young men of the embassy, ashamed of this rather ridiculous scene, were evidently pained by it. I rose from table, alleging lateness of the hour and the drive we were to take. Upon this the whole company hastened to the farm, where carriages were ready for us, while the ambassador set out back for town.

It was the season and hour when the gnats are worst! One would have said a bad fairy had called them to this charming habitation, so as to hinder one's belief of being in paradise. If I speak of it here, it is because the little pests gave rise to a delightful impromptu. The youngest of the party, whom I have already mentioned, M. de Panat, much taken up with his importance and with his *very tiny person,* gave vent to bitter complaints, and deafened us with the piercing shrieks that every new sting wrested from him, and so much so that, at the end of the drive he exclaimed he was dead, that the last of his enemies had just finished him off, and that, being eaten by these cannibals, nothing remained for him but to be buried. Charmed at having another monument to put in the park, I offered the epitaph for competition! Here is what M. de Brévannes handed me after a few minutes; he had written it in his notebook, as he was

walking. It will give the measure of the subtlety and gracefulness of his wit:

Mourn for this human fraction, so minute
That, when a gnat to dine upon it tried,
The equally unlucky little brute
Of hunger died!

M. de Panat was as delighted as ourselves over this quatrain; he made fun of himself with a good humour that was entirely French.

Lovable and no less clever nation, sweet country that I may perhaps never see again, whose charm I have so well understood, and whose memory I have so faithfully kept alive—receive my grateful homage here! Had I to begin that painful task *called life* again, I would wish to be born a Frenchwoman! Not that I disown my country; Heaven forbid! The more oppressed she is, the more claim has she to be cherished by her children. But if one had the choice, before being *committed,* were it not allowable to improve one's lot, in order to escape from so many deceived hopes, so many irreparable misfortunes?

I was then at the time of life when the future always looks better than it is to be, as if in consolation for the present. To-day, when sorrows have aged me even more than years, I regret the past, and count little on the future; it could never give me back all I have lost!

Let us return to M. de Pradt, so as not to have to speak of him again. When he was about to leave our house, to occupy the Brühl Palace, he thought it up to his dignity to leave my father-in-law a remembrance. At Willanow he admired Count Potocki's fine picture gallery, and knowing that my father-in-law, who had collected these pictures, was *amateur* and *connoisseur* in one, he asked permission to offer him a masterpiece.

"He will not spoil the gallery," said he.

My father-in-law did his best to decline, but not caring to disoblige the ambassador, he at last accepted.

The painting he offered was in the episcopal palace at Malines; it took a rather long time to send for it.

"It will very likely be a Madonna of the Flemish school," said my father-in-law; I set no great store by them, nearly all of these Madonnas are wanting in nobility." "But supposing it were a Dürer or a Holbein?" I replied.

And so we amused ourselves by guessing how far the magnificence of this gift would go, which was costing the giver nothing. At last the long expected box arrived! The most miserable of daubs was unrolled! It was the portrait of a brigand once famous in the country districts. But what was this picture doing in a palace adjoining the cathedral? That is what M. de Pradt was never able to tell us.

I was at great pains to hide my astonishment; my father-in-law, whose politeness was extreme, simulated rapture, and M. de Pradt withdrew, persuaded that he had mystified his host. The masterpiece took its place in the garret of Willanow.

CHAPTER IV

THE RETREAT

1812-1813

FIRST NEWS OF THE DISASTERS—ARRIVAL OF NAPOLEON AT WARSAW—THE DINNER AT THE HÔTEL D'ANGLETERRE—MADAME WALEWSKA—COLONEL WONSOWICZ'S STORY—RETURN OF THE TROOPS—PRINCE PONIATOWSKI—MOJAÏSK—THE EAGLES—THE CUCKOO—PATRIOTIC ENTHUSIASM—PRINCE PONIATOWSKI'S FAREWELL AND DEPARTURE—HIS WILL.

As far as Moscow the bulletins were magnificent—the enemy was in retreat; we were assured he was running away, and gave credence to it simply because it was our dearest wish.

I shall not stop to speak of such well-known events, on which able writers will often dwell. I shall merely note down the circumstances relating to Poland and the impressions we gathered.

During the winter of 1812 the assemblies at the embassy had become brilliant. People went there the more eagerly as it was at M. de Pradt's evening parties that they learnt the impatiently awaited news. When no couriers arrived the severity of the weather was blamed, which made the

roads impassable. It was understood that there was no cause for alarm.

When I review in memory the different sensations to which the events gave birth, I cannot find enough astonishment at our stupid and inexplicable feeling of safety.

The disasters which were about to overwhelm the army were foreseen only by a small number of alarmists. The news of the burning of Moscow was the first signal of the rout. However, the ambassador took all possible and impossible measures to nourish the illusions we were pleased to cherish. The messages sent from the army to the empress were diverted, and went to Berlin—not a letter intrusted to the post reached its address; all were intercepted. M. de Pradt seemed to have selected for his motto: *Amuse and abuse;* he was giving splendid balls and dinners.

But of a sudden the news stopped altogether, and soon it was impossible to conceal what had happened. Faithful to the part he had set himself, the ambassador wanted to have us dance once more! But that last ball was so lugubrious that it reminded one more of a funeral service than a gay festivity.

My father-in-law having communicated the news to me, —so persistently kept back,—under the seal of secrecy, insisted that I should go to this ball. I donned a black velvet dress, so as to have a pretext for not dancing. M. de Pradt, pretending to be very shocked at a dress so unsuited to the occasion, repeated several times that it was out of keeping with my age. But while he did the honours with the easiest air in the world, it was whispered that the ambassador had just then received orders to hold himself in readiness for departure, and that his traps were being packed.

Where the blow was expected least it was felt most. Warsaw fell into a sort of silent stupor. A frightful anxiety had seized all the families who had fathers, brothers, and husbands

in the army. People only approached one another trembling. Imagination, this time, remained far behind the horrible truth. We were informed of everything at once, the news having been kept secret for more than a fortnight. The splendours that had fascinated us crumbled away in an instant. We understood that the most desperate efforts could henceforth not prolong a conflict on which all our hopes had been staked. The drama of several months ended in a dreadful manner: the ruin of the country and a host of private misfortunes. In vain the attempt to stretch out doubt as to the lot of those who had sacrificed all to the holiest of causes! The despair was general: we were inconsolable at thus seeing the only chance favouring the restoration of Poland fade away. It was no longer to be presumed that Napoleon would regain his influence in the North and lay down the law there in the future.

The 10th of December we were mournfully gathered about the family hearth, and were deploring the inexpressible failure of the great man who had obstinately laid his power and fame in gage against the imperious process of nature. Suddenly my father-in-law was mysteriously called for on behalf of the ambassador. Every one was expecting to see M. de Pradt depart, from one moment to the next, so that our first idea was simply of a farewell visit.

The anxious hours went by. Anything that might happen would but alarm us—there was no further hope of good fortune possible.

At the end of this long wait Count Stanislaus Potocki came back, visibly affected; he let us guess who the person was he had been talking with. It was the Emperor Napoleon himself, who, after sacrificing a million of men to his bold caprice, returned *alone,* conquered by a destroying element, but in no wise cast down, much less *discouraged.*

His stupendous genius opened the vision to him of France's immense resources, and the possibility of utilising them to catch the sceptre of the world again, which was about to escape him.

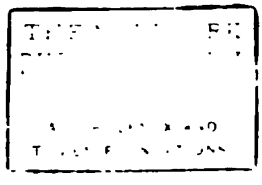
He spoke of the disasters without seeking to disguise them, nor even to minimise their horrors. He admitted his mistakes, and alluded to the excessive confidence he had placed in his star, which up to that fatal hour had seemed to lord it over the elements. He detailed all the favourable prospects the future might offer, and gave a succinct review of European politics; he enumerated, with rare sagacity, the favourable and untoward circumstances he might meet with. He did not destroy our hopes, but encouraged our efforts, promised to return at the head of a fresh army, in a word, passed the fire of his discourse into the souls of the listeners. The fascination exercised by this extraordinary man upon all who heard him was so potent that my father-in-law, who had left us quite depressed, came back full of hope. And this, though he was no longer at the age of illusions, and his exact and penetrating mind made for the practical side in all the serious affairs of life.

We who had not been present at the discourse of the great magician, and were not under the spell, remained shattered. The present alone concerned us. It appeared a hideous spectacle. Through this bloody vision, the future, which had betrayed us so many times, loomed up gloomy and desolate.

M. de Pradt, in the account he published of his mission, by trying to cast ridicule upon this remarkable interview, exhibited himself in a most unfavourable light. He played the part of the suborned flatterer to the end, and evinced himself full of admiration for his master's plans, as well as for the saying so often since repeated: *From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but a step.* He retired only after many protestations.

THE RETREAT FROM RUSSIA.

After the painting by Yvon.



We were greatly surprised to learn, that instead of stopping at the embassy, Napoleon had preferred to go to the *Hôtel d'Angleterre,* where he dined. Perhaps he had a notion of thereby saving his much compromised *incognito,* for he alighted at the entrance to the Praga Bridge, and traversed the whole suburb of Cracow at the hour when that section of the town is most alive, dressed in a green velvet fur coat with gold frogs, and a large sable cap on his head. It was a surprising thing that he was neither followed nor recognised. Occupied with current events, people could not think of the emperor already being this side of the Vistula, while he was still supposed to be lost in the ice and snow of the Dzwina. He was escorted by no one but M. de Caulaincourt and Colonel Wonsowicz, his orderly officer, whose bravery and devotion were known to him. His Mameluke had been ordered not to leave the carriage, and only to come to the hotel at dark, when everything should be ready for departure.

As he sat down to table Napoleon sent for the ambassador, and instructed him to summon the president of the council and the two ministers, Mostowski and Matuszewicz, with whom he wished to converse.

Horses were ordered at the post station in the name of M. de Caulaincourt,—this was the way of preserving the *incognito,*—and about nine in the evening they started again. Here is an anecdote as singular as it is little known:

Napoleon wanted to turn out of his road to go to see Madame Walewska, who, as I have stated, was living alone in her castle. M. de Caulaincourt, to whom the emperor confided his project, opposed this lover's whim very violently; he had the courage to make representations of all its *impropriety,* and to dwell on the effect such frivolity would have on the empress, and on those who would not forgive Napoleon for thinking of his love affairs at a time when he had lately abandoned his routed army. After sulking for

a few minutes, the emperor, too just to bear resentment against one who had just given him this new proof of attachment and good sense, gave Caulaincourt assurances of esteem and affection which did honour to both men. Colonel Wonsowicz, a witness of this little scene enacted in the coach, not being bound to secrecy, told me about it in the spiciest manner.

We were also indebted to him for curious details of the emperor's arrival at Dresden. The sole faithful ally remaining to him was the King of Saxony; he wished to speak with this prince on the steps he was contemplating. Arrived at M. de Serra's in the middle of the night, and wanting not to lose an instant, he had Colonel Wonsowicz commanded to go at once to the royal palace, and to wake the king, who from time immemorial had never been disturbed in his sleep. The watch and the sentinel were also asleep—it was only by going through the greatest difficulties that the emperor's envoy reached the king's apartment. He, started up by an officer, had all the trouble in the world to understand that Napoleon, passing through his capital, asked for a moment's conversation. Enlightened by Wonsowicz, he was dressed in haste, and threw himself into a sedan chair to be carried to the minister's, for the court stables being situated in the suburbs, too much time would have been required to get a carriage at this hour of the night, at which never before had anything unexpected happened. In the morning, the rumor was spread of the king's disappearance, and of its being unknown what had become of him. Great was the alarm. The chamberlains, the pages, and the runners scoured the town, spreading this strange news, whose explanation was forthcoming only when the emperor was already on the way to Paris.

A few days after Napoleon's return those of our soldiers who had been in a fit state to endure the journey gradually

appeared. Some were clad in rags, which could have been no protection against the cold; others, better provided, were wearing women's furs.

We saw Count Arthur Potocki, Prince Poniatowski's adjutant, arrive in an open sledge, stricken with a nervous fever.

Prince Poniatowski was one of the last to come back. His journey had been long and severe. He had twisted his foot in getting off a horse, and was obliged to remain in his carriage in a recumbent position, experiencing great pain at the least jolt.

As soon as I learnt of the prince's arrival, I hastened to kiss his hands. His features, overcast by his sufferings, expressed even more mental than physical pain. He bitterly deplored the splendid army which had been cut to pieces under his very eyes; he bewailed the heroic death of so many braves sacrificed to the incomprehensible lapse of prudence on the part of the great man to whom, nevertheless, he had remained faithful in spite of all. I thought I perceived he had not altogether lost hope, and was all the more surprised, as he belonged to the few who, though they did so devotedly, did not go blindly into such a gigantic contest. He stated that his sojourn in Warsaw would be brief, and that once the remnants of the Polish army were gathered together, he would actively take the reorganisation of the troops in hand.

He added that, for the carnival, we should have Austrian officers, less affable than the French, but perfect dancers. This was an allusion to the Prince of Schwartzenberg's regiment, on which Napoleon was still counting, a final illusion, which endured but a few days; for no sooner did the Polish army advance upon Cracow than the Austrian general handed over Warsaw to the Prussians, and then the treason became patent.

Having noticed a huge folio near the prince's bed, I asked him laughingly if that was not his memoirs.

"Oh, we have plenty of time to write!" said he. "Take the volume as a remembrance; it is my *private loot.* I had it picked up on the march, and read it for amusement. It is a journey to the East. Keep it for your children; time will add value to it. You know, I hope, that we went through the midst of abandoned treasures in Moscow *supporting arms;* not one of my men left the ranks." He spoke these few words with a sort of proud satisfaction shining in his eyes.

I could not refrain from reminding him of another occurrence, the assault on the battery whose capture resulted in the memorable victory of Mojaïsk. He listened to me with his characteristic modesty—he made so little of the gifts nature had lavished on him, that his rare valour seemed to him the attribute of every well conditioned man; he did not believe in cowards.

A few days after his return, while we were listening with intense interest to his story of the campaign, an officer came to inform him that a great number of soldiers were begging permission to give back their eagles to their captain.

Unable to walk, the prince had himself carried into the courtyard; we followed. I then witnessed a touching and sublime sight. As soon as Poniatowski apppeared on the steps before the door all those braves crowded about him, depositing their eagles at his feet. The soldiers had not lost sight of these insignia for a moment; at a time when others had thought only of saving their lives, they had thought of the honour of the regiment. A single one of these eagles was missing.

"Ah!" they all cried at once, "he is here, the *cuckoo*, but as his head has been carried off by a bullet, our comrade is ashamed to present him in this pitiful state. Come on, come forward, it is not your fault!"

had succeeded the most poignantly cruel sensations. The future loomed up threatening.

The great fight, the fight to the death—all Europe against one man—was really to begin, and to settle our fate.

Alas! It was not on the banks of the Dzwina but on the shores of the Rhine that the colossal duel was to be enacted. It was all over with the hero's good fortune; the ruins of his throne were to crush us in their fall.

Meanwhile, our army received orders to advance upon Cracow. Prince Poniatowski left Warsaw at the end of January. He was completely restored, and at the moment of departure came to bid me farewell. I noticed that his handsome face was sad and melancholy. It was not the thought of saying good-bye which disturbed him; indifferent to his own fate, he was thinking of Napoleon's. He foresaw the collapse of the edifice of his power over Europe, built upon victories.

When I embraced him for the last time I could not hold back my tears—and then he scolded me; he forbade me to mourn him if he should happen to meet with a glorious death on a field of battle. Should he not be happy, he asked, not to see the misfortunes which would probably befall our poor country?

Observing that, despite the consolation he was trying to dispense, I continued in my affliction, he attempted to give the conversation a lighter turn.

He sent for my children, kissed them, enjoined it upon me to speak to them about him some day, and departed, a great deal more moved than he wished to appear. Alas, it was the last good-bye! We ascertained afterwards that, sure of never coming back, he had made his will, and nothing was nobler and touching than the tone of his last wishes. He desired his collection of weapons to be distributed among his former comrades, and the money found

Poniatowski, with difficulty concealing the grief he had felt at seeing three-quarters of his soldiers fall the day before.

"No matter! Seven thousand Poles under your command are worth an army corps."

"Your Majesty, we are all ready to be killed."

There, once more, the Poles performed miracles; but the small number who escaped from the enemy were hemmed in through the blowing up of the bridge at Leipsic. Their heroic chief, perceiving himself about to be taken prisoner, jumped into the Elster. He did not know how to swim, and one of his arms was in a sling. He went down in the floods of that wretched little river, immensely swollen by the autumn rains.

"God put the honour of the Poles into my hands, and to God I deliver it!" Such were his last words. In their sublime simplicity they summed up the history of his whole life.

For some days we remained ignorant of the cruel catastrophe which was the culmination of our misfortunes. The Russians, who were masters of Warsaw, suppressed the details of the battle; but soon we learnt the frightful news, whose effect can only be compared to that of an earthquake. The country was at the mercy of our most barbarous enemies, our army was destroyed, all our resources were exhausted. The modest Duchy of Warsaw, which once had seemed beneath our aspirations and efforts, was to become a subject of everlasting regret.

Napoleon found himself at great pains to replace Prince Poniatowski—he would not disband what remained of the Polish troops, reckoning upon employing them if occasion offered. His choice fell upon Prince Sulkowski, who had distinguished himself in Spain, and whose name was associated with his memories of Egypt, where a Sulkowski had attracted his attention and won his favour. This choice was not happy. Sulkowski, though full of valour, had

with which kings are rarely endowed: he understood exalted sentiments, and did not seem to take umbrage at them.

Directly after the fate of our country had been settled at the Congress of Vienna, the Emperor Alexander added to his other titles that of King of Poland, and, wishing to give an appearance of nationality to the government, he nominated a council, with which three men of the highest integrity were connected: Prince Adam Czartoryski, Wawrzecki and Prince Lubecki—the presidency devolved upon the Russian Senator Lanckoy.

Novosiltzoff was also a member of the council.

Nature had disfigured this man, as though she had planned the repulsive expression of his face to act as an advertisement to those whom his cunning and duplicity might lead into error. He squinted in a very singular manner: while one of his eyes fawned, the other searched the bottom of the soul for the thoughts one attempted to hide from him. He was presented to me by Prince Czartoryski, and, during the first part of his stay in Warsaw, often came to my house, apparently to find out what was being said and what was thought there.

I acknowledge that he attracted me for some months—I believed him true to our interests. People more experienced than I were caught, and recovered less quickly. A natural son of Count Strogonoff, Novosiltzoff had been brought up abroad, thanks to the munificence of this great noble. His sojourn in England had given him the appearance of a "gentleman." His malignant influence was exercised in Poland for twenty years. A vile and covetous informer, he was perpetually inventing conspiracies to frighten the government, and thus compromising the liberty and life of young students whom unhappy mothers ransomed at the price of their slender possessions.

Upon his installation, M. de Lanckoy sent for his wife

CHAPTER II

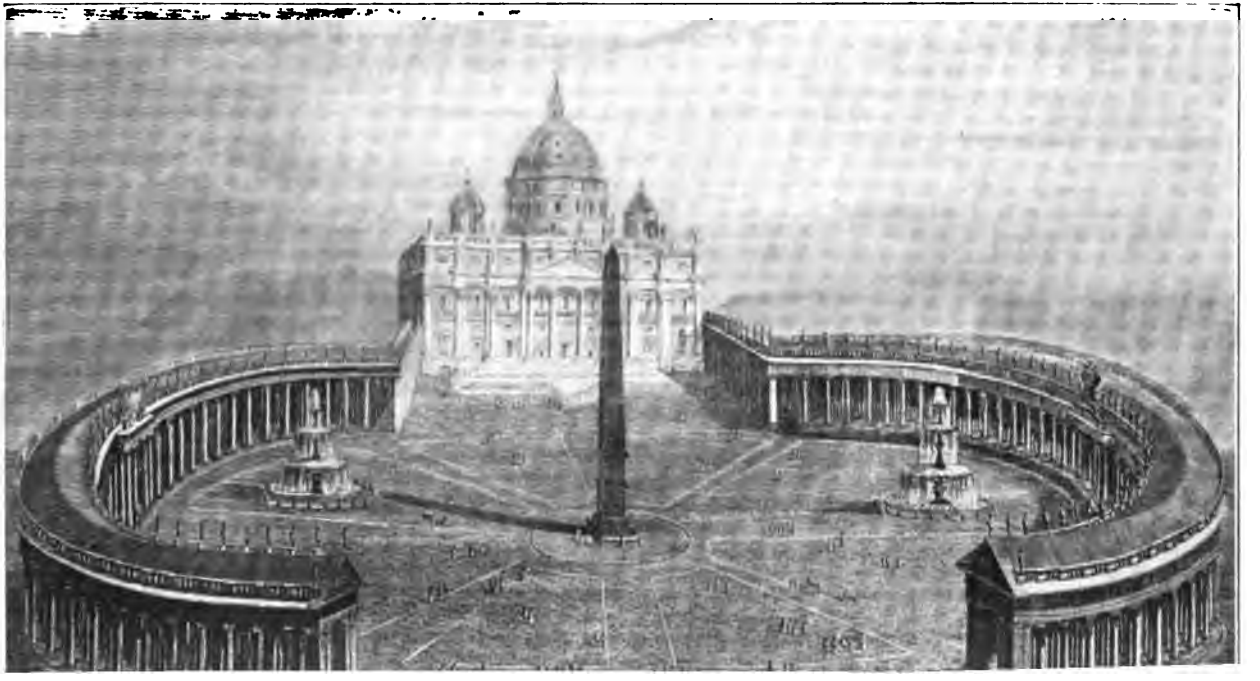
THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA

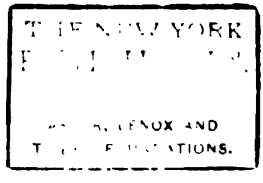
1815

PRINCE CZARTORYSKI AT THE CONGRESS—CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORDS GRAY AND HOLLAND—THE PRINCE DE METTERNICH—THE PRINCE DE TALLEYRAND—LORD CASTLEREAGH—THE CONGRESS DANCES—MONARCHS AND MISTRESSES—THE TOURNAMENT—NEWS OF NAPOLEON'S LANDING—LONG LIVE THE KING OF POLAND!—THE NEW CONSTITUTION.

PRINCE CZARTORYSKI, blinded by illusion, and believing the object was reached towards which all his thoughts and actions had tended, had followed the Emperor Alexander to the Congress of Vienna. There an everlasting battle ensued between fiction and truth. Perceiving that Alexander's plans were by no means what he had flattered himself they were going to be, and being desperately anxious to engross England in the interests of his country, the prince engaged in an intimate and sustained correspondence with Lord Gray and Lord Holland; he did his best to explain to them that it was indispensable to the peace of Europe that the encroachments of Russia be checked, and Poland be set up again on a sufficiently strong footing to act as the bulwark of civilisation.

These letters, copies of which I saw, the prince was so

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injudicious as to confide to the care of a secretary wl worked with him personally for a number of years. character and devotion of this man appeared to be sufficient guarantees, but the letters were finally abst in the most underhand manner, and given up to Novosiltzoff, who afterwards used them as evidence a a minister and friend on whom Alexander bestowed th est confidence. The emperor having learnt, in the of years, to value the qualities and talents of Czart at the beginning of the congress associated him with work bearing upon the future destiny of Poland. But toryski, who had no ambition but to be useful to his co and to serve her with unexcelled zeal, was like the of antiquity who sacrificed all their affections to motherland. They who had suspected him of workii himself have strangely misjudged him.

Of course the representatives of the different Eur cabinets came to Vienna with other intentions than th peror of Russia.

They were all agreed upon the iniquity of the pa of Poland, as well as upon the impossibility of allowir continued existence of a state of affairs which must incessant trouble. They all wanted that country to r her former condition, to be free and independent.

Prince Metternich protested in the name of his m declaring he would not shrink before the greatest sac but with the proviso that Poland be ruled by a na government.

M. de Talleyrand on his side insisted, in the na France, on the re-establishment of Poland, saying th partition of that country had been the prelude to th turbance of all Europe; but that the King of F scarcely firmly installed, could take no more than a visory part in the matter.

As in England public opinion always influences the politics of the cabinet more or less, Lord Castlereagh did not fail to speak very plainly about Poland, urging the necessity of making reparation for the worst political crime that had ever soiled the annals of the civilised world. The noble lord asked the parties concerned to adopt a system which *would do them honour in the eyes of the whole world.*

Prussia, whose interests were bound up with Russia's, observed silence, glad to have escaped from the destruction with which Napoleon had threatened her.

In the midst of these momentous transactions the Congress *danced,* as it has been maliciously said. We were kept aware of everything that happened; every one had friends or correspondents, who eagerly recounted the most trifling details. The sovereigns, like children escaped from their teacher's ferrule for the first time, gave rapturous vent to the enjoyment of being masters at home. The great colossus who had kept them uneasy for so long was not there to threaten and constrain them. Completely happy, they amused themselves, *like the kings they were,* imagining they had nothing further to fear. Each monarch made his choice of a lady. Alexander paid homage to the young woman reputed the most virtuous, Princess Ansperg; she was thought so proper and so plain that this selection caused unstinted surprise; some even laughed in their sleeve, the famous Mlle. Bourgoing having compromised the emperor's reputation during his stay in Paris.

The King of Prussia became smitten with the pretty Julia Zycsy. All the minor potentates followed this example, and soon the congress was metamorphosed into a court of love, so that, every morning, the ministers exchanged diplomatic notes with whose contents the sovereigns acquainted themselves very speedily, in great haste as they were to fly to their pleasures. So business went limping.

The Viennese court displayed a magnificence wh one had dreamt of; it seemed as though, on the ve ruin, the treasury must have been depleted; but th nowhere apparent. The Emperor Francis gave go festivities, among them a *tournament,* at which the nobility of the country vied with one another in splei the old coats of mail, and the wealth of the caparisc in gold and precious stones, could, if required, hav somed some illustrious prisoners.

The loveliest ladies appeared, covered with diam they distributed prizes worthy of the magnificence festival, which was given in the great imperial riding Several thousands of spectators were present, admitt cards given out by the court and by the ladies.

In the midst of this gaiety and these splendid ente ments M. de Talleyrand received a message which br the news of Napoleon's landing. There was no l time to exchange notes and to negotiate; it was a g scramble to get out of the way—nothing else was th of. Couriers were sent out in every direction to stc several armies, all on their way home. It would be to assert that, that day, kings and ministers went t with their hats on and girt about with their swords, was their alarm!

This was the dissolution of the famous congress an birth of the treaty of 1815—come into the world unde stress of fear inspired by the unexpected return of N leon. And this treaty settled the fate of Poland.

Alexander, pleased with a quicker and easier concl than he had dared to hope for,—given the difficulti had encountered at the outset,—proclaimed himself kii a country that was yielded to him without reserve. made a great to-do about an alleged restoration, whic pretended to look upon as his most beautiful title to im

tality, whereas, at bottom, it was nothing but one ***partition more,*** seeing that, gaining four millions of subjects, he could not possibly dispute the others their free possession of the provinces they had allotted to themselves at the dismemberment of our unhappy country.

Unable to deny that he must justify himself in the sight of those whom he had many a time promised a great deal more than he had kept, Alexander declared that the ***peace of Europe*** had not allowed, for the moment, of all the Poles being united into a single state.

The messenger who brought this important piece of news was at once sent on, armed with despatches for the President, the Senate, and M. de Novosiltzoff.

He arrived towards evening. At once a discussion arose how to publish the contents of the important missive ***in the most striking manner.*** Novosiltzoff, who took the initiative in everything, decided the best way would be to exclaim in the auditorium of the theatre, during the intermission: *Long live the King of Poland!* A singular invention, to be sure!

From anybody else this mode of announcing an event of such great moment would justly have been thought a kind of epigram, for there was certainly comedy in all this affair. But it was not to be supposed that the imperial commisssary was perpetrating a bad joke. So the thing was done in that way, and as there were a number of people in the parterre who were suborned, and still more who were dupes, the shouts and the applause became frantic. But the boxes remained cold and silent! None of the persons who influenced opinion joined in the noisy demonstrations which burst forth from different places in the parterre.

M. de Novosiltzoff fussed in vain, shot encouragement from his squinting eyes, dispensed smiles and handshakes; every one quickly resumed silence.

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Some of the emperor's adjutants who happened t
Warsaw circulated in the theatre; they stopped at th
of the boxes, but, discouraged by the cold receptic
met with, and hardly knowing what countenance to t
they went back to their places with the utmost appear
being discomfited.

In such a manner, then, were we apprised of an e
such apparently large importance, but which scarc
fected our precarious position, although we were pro
constitution founded on national representation.

A representative government, like that which he h
operating in England, was for the moment Alex
hobby. He played at constitution-making as littl
play at being lady.

Those near and devoted to him claimed that his
tions and projects tended to perform more than l
promised; they said that Alexander, embarrassed by t
content in Russia which his partiality for the Pol
already beginning to stir up, was obliged to act wit
and deliberation. This assertion I am unable to
but it seems to me that, if Alexander had *sincerely*
to regenerate Poland, he would never have delegate
authority to his brother, the Grand Duke Const
knowing quite well that he must abuse it, and also t
character and ideas ran counter to the generous and
measures which the emperor declared himself as desi
adopting. On the 13th of May, 1815, Alexander sig
preliminaries of a constitution by which his new ki
was to be regulated. Not without surprise was the
ing promise remarked, that our charter would be, as
possible, approximated to that of May 3, 1791, the
of every patriot's respect. But a different sentimer
evoked when it was seen, in the following article, th
same constitution was to be regarded as a *sacred bond*

united for all times the Kingdom of Poland to the Empire of Russia.

Nevertheless, had this charter taken effect in good faith, the nation would have been satisfied. But displeasure reached its highest pitch when, on the day of publication, it was noticed that some articles had been omitted, and others altered. The charter had passed through the hands of M. de Novosiltzoff.

him, and present bread and salt to him, signs of peace and unity with the Northern nations. This was with reason deemed too theatrical, and was not adopted. Others wanted the ceremonies resuscitated once practised at the election of kings. M. de Novosiltzoff frowned on this plan, saying it was not proper to mix *memories with hopes*. The form customary in every country was therefore decided upon, that is to say illumination with transparents and free theatrical performances. The town gave a splendid ball in the Assembly-rooms, which were for the occasion connected with the Grand Theatre, and which were decorated with supreme taste and elegance.

The emperor came escorted by a whole staff of Polish generals; himself wore our military uniform, and wore no decoration but the cordon of the White Eagle. It looked as though, striving to make us forget that he was ruling other peoples, he wished to instill into us as much confidence as affection. His insinuating manners, the gentle and benevolent expression of his face, touched every one, and, let us frankly confess, the ease with which we Poles allow ourselves to be impressed did the remainder, and I believe on that day, Alexander, carried away by the outburst of the sentiments his presence evoked, *imagined* a free and independent Poland, where he would have found a home and faithful subjects.

It was at this ball that for the first time we saw the Grand Duke Constantine acting as adjutant to his august brother; with sword at side, tight-buttoned uniform, he never let the emperor out of his sight, eager for his commands, and appearing to enjoy the stiff and unnatural demeanour which the habit of being on duty begets. Nor did he ever excuse himself from this parade, and whenever the emperor came to Warsaw the grand duke yielded his place to no one; he called *duty* what was his greatest pleasure.

He was thus condemned not to dance, and always to stand at the door of the room, so as not to miss the departure of his *superior*.

In passing I hazarded a jest to which he replied with imperturbable gravity: "Duty before everything. The emperor himself could not release me from it."

Such was this prince's love of discipline, that he would have thought himself committing a crime had he, giving way to his brother's insistence, for an instant left his post. To him the drill-ground was as good as a field of battle, because, not at all brave by nature, he liked only the imitation of that dangerous trade. His excessive severity towards the soldier resulted as much from the ferocity of his instincts as the extreme importance he attached to the minutest details. Had Constantine been endowed with Alexander's character, he would surely have ultimately subdued the Poles. It is even probable that the burning patriotism which had roused us to the boldest and most reckless enterprises would at length have succumbed to the influence of a government less arbitrary and more in accord with the institutions which had been promised us.

Let us hope that Providence, in its inscrutable designs, is reserving for us a destiny we cannot possibly foresee, and that its blessings will be proportionate to our punishment.

The emperor's first stay was accompanied by noteworthy changes in the administration of the kingdom. The provisional government was replaced by a permanent government. M. de Lanckoy went off, I scarcely know to what degree of latitude, to manage one of the provinces of the vast empire, where I am sure he was more in place than he had been at Warsaw.

The army already had a chief in the person of the grand duke; it was a question of nominating the lieutenant of the kingdom, and of forming a ministry. The emperor called

into the government nearly all who were ministers during the short life of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. M. Sobolewski was Secretary of State, M. Matuszewicz took the finances, M. Mostowski the Department of War, Count Stanislaus Potocki, my father-in-law, Public Instruction; the judicial branch was confided to Wawrzecki, the only man who had taken no previous part in Polish affairs, because, being in the service of Russia, he had come to Warsaw only after Alexander had given us a temporary government. He was not very favourably regarded, although his honourable character and the services he had rendered his country, after the War of 1794, ought to have sufficed to condone his acceptance of an office which was forced upon him.

All the other ministers happened to be men of eminent minds, of remarkable education, whose proved patriotism and unimpeachable descent gave the best founded hopes to the nation, which could not do otherwise than applaud Alexander's selection. At the instigation of Napoleon he unhappily judged it necessary to send a representative with the title of Imperial Commissioner, to keep an eye on the Polish government, and, more unhappily still, this very momentous choice fell upon M. de Novosiltzoff. His mission had in truth no further pretext than to *facilitate* relations between Poland and Russia; but by force of cunning and skill he at last insinuated himself into the Supreme Council, and was ignorant of nothing that happened there. Being the secret agent of the Russian party envious of Poland's timid emancipation, it seems he was bent upon a rupture between sovereign and nation.

The nomination of the lieutenant was the first act by which Alexander hurt public opinion. No one was worthier to fill this important post than the Prince Czartoryski. An intimate friend of the emperor, initiated into all the political secrets of the day, known for his civic virtues, his great

erudition, and his integrity, he was fully fit to be the emperor's representative. Such had probably been Alexander's first intention; but yielding from the first to a sinister influence, he sacrificed his friend to the prepossessions, or rather the premonitions, of his brother. Czartoryski certainly would never have been an instrument to the insane demands of an arbitrary rule; he would not have behaved like the Grand Duke, who never was able to submit to an order of things he did not even understand.

The Prince Czartoryski did no more than keep his place in the senate, and lost all *direct* influence upon public affairs; he nevertheless remained curator of the University of Wilna. In this important post he was supreme arbiter of public instruction, and eight millions of Poles under Russian dominion for a number of years owed him the most careful education, as well as the inculcation of the noblest sentiments.

Constantine took umbrage at names which owed their prominence to the times only. He never could disguise his aversion for the great Polish families; hence he hinted to the emperor, that the choice of a lieutenant ought to fall upon an *obscure* military man, who, bound by ties of devotion to Russia, would never oppose obstacles to any order he might be given. Both agreed to appoint to this post a decrepit old individual devoid of any administrative ideas, and whose weak character and subservience to the new dynasty assured his docility in advance. Zaïonczek bowed his head grown white in camps of war, and accepted, as it was very judiciously put, a charge above his ability and compensation below his merits. An upstart soldier, and a creature of the infamous Branicki, he had been seen, as a sycophant of Napoleon, to follow the general to Egypt, without however becoming noticed among such a host of distinguished officers.

Returning to the Polish service at the time when the great

man was giving a new lease of life to our army, he had lost a leg at Moscow, which lowered an already unfavourable opinion, as likewise did the injurious rumours to which his *equivocal* conduct in the war of independence had given rise.

His wife deserves to take a place in my memoirs, and if history denies her a page, those who, as I did, knew her intimately, must in all fairness speak of the dignity with which she knew how to maintain herself in the exalted position allotted to her. She exercised a great influence over her husband; she unceasingly combatted the servile eagerness which he applied to the carrying out of the most iniquitous behests, when he would at every opportunity violate the constitution and declare openly, that before all he was doing the will of Alexander with the same ardour and fidelity which once he would have pledged to the service of Napoleon.

This incessant strife frequently brought violent storms into the family. Madame Zaïonczek, driven out at one door, came back through the other, and told her husband truths which no one else would have ventured, and which did not always remain without effect.

Gifted with infinite tact and moderation, she was the great lady among the great, and humble among us. Her sudden promotion in no wise disturbed her habits or relationships. Issued from an unknown family, she continued her connection with her own people; she never repudiated them, without however pushing or keeping them forward. Noble and unselfish, she was far more anxious about her husband's reputation than of the advantages of which her position might have rendered her desirous. As light in her tastes as she was sound in sentiment and opinion, she presented the curious combination of the most feminine frivolity and admirable stability of character.

Half minister, half Ninon,—less publicity,—she indulged her love for dress and the fashions, and also her leaning for

tender affairs, in spite of her sixty years, without, nevertheless, ever allowing an opportunity to escape of being useful to her husband.

The empress mother, though strict as to the proprieties, treated her with the utmost distinction during a stay she made at Warsaw, and even had her thanked for resisting the grand duke's advances, who had wanted her to introduce into society his mistress, a Frenchwoman, whose antecedents were of such a character as to shut doors in her face.

Here is how the thing happened: There was to be a great ball at the lieutenant's; M. de Novosiltzoff, ever *obliging,* had taken it upon himself to go to ask for an invitation card for Madame Fridrichs. Most luckily Madame Zaïonczek came into her husband's room at the very moment this delicate piece of business was under transaction, and, perceiving him disposed not to refuse, she declared that, if he acceded to such an unseemly request, she would give herself out as ill and not attend the ball, unless indeed the grand duke should send an order, written and signed by his own hand, so that she could justify herself in the eyes of the women of society.

The gallant Mercury conducting the negotiations retired beaten.

Madame Zaïonczek suffered the reproaches of her husband, who prophesied her the greatest misfortunes. But quite on the contrary this determined act, which soon was as well known in Warsaw as in St. Petersburg, earned universal regard for her.

The grand duke submitted not without ill humour, but dared to say nothing; he was quite sensible to the impropriety of the step he had taken. No one had a stronger sense of justice and injustice than himself. Too weak to refuse his mistress anything, and counting on the cowardly

acquiescence which the lieutenant manifested on every occasion, he did not foresee that his wife would interpose an invincible objection to this absurd plan. Much too sly to let his resentment appear immediately, he slowly prepared his little revenge.

Some time after what I have reported the town gave a grand ball to Constantine, and asked Madame Zaïonczek to do the honours. As was right Madame Fridrichs was not invited.

Standing in the middle of the ballroom, the duke gave himself up to his ill humour. It was the rule for the lady assigned to the reception of the guests to attend chiefly upon him in whose honour the festivity was held. But in vain did the patroness seek to interest the grand duke with various topics of conversation; habitually talkative, he that day would not reply except in monosyllables, when all of a sudden putting up his eyeglass, he began to scrutinise Madame Zaïonczek's ball-dress, a costume so pretty and fresh, that a young girl might have envied her.

Constantine's smile boded no good. Madame Zaïonczek being one of those people whom nothing escaped, was fortifying herself against attack, the while pretending not to notice the persistence with which the grand duke was examining her. The hour of vengeance had sounded; there was no escape.

"Still fifteen, the age of *flowers and loves!*" said the duke, promenading his eyeglass all over her from top to toe.

"My Lord Duke, do you command me to withdraw?" said Madame Zaïonczek, accompanying these few words with a movement which indicated she was ready to leave the ball. This coolness and this threat so put the duke out of countenance, that he remained aghast, proffering apologies in the awkwardest way in the world, and this time again the laugh was not with him.

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE OF THE GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE

1820

THE DIET OF 1818—THE GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE'S PART—PRINCE JOSEPH PONIATOWSKI'S STATUE—JOAN GRUDZINSKA—MADAME FRIDRICHS—THE WEDDING—THE PIANO—MADAME WEISS—THE DUCHESS OF LOWICZ.

THE 17th of March, 1818, was the memorable date of the opening of the diet. Europe listened with astonishment and admiration to the words of an autocrat deeply imprinted with the love of liberty. Alexander was giving free institutions to a small number of his subjects.

"With the help of God," he said, "I hope to extend these beneficent principles to all the countries that Providence has confided to my care."

It was not Poland alone, but also Russia that received the tacit promise of a future enjoyment of the constitutional liberties we had been bereft of.

The nation assembled in full faith, believing itself called to exercise its rights. Meanwhile the sovereign's intentions had been perverted:

1. Right of suspending individual liberty (*habeas corpus*) *according as the interest of the country might re-*

quire. 2. The budget would not be put before the chambers for debate until the monarch *thought expedient.* 3. The censorship would be maintained.

However this may have been, the emperor's inaugural address was nothing but an apology for constitutional government. All the newspapers lauded to the skies the monarch who was setting so fine an example, an example one hoped to see imitated in Germany, where the nation seemed still riper for such institutions.

The marshal of the diet was General Krasinski, who was as fully attached to Russia as Zaïonczek. Over this man he had no advantages but his birth and a remnant of military renown somehow acquired in the Napoleonic wars.

One of the strangest events of this diet was the part the grand duke set himself. As a prince of the blood, the charter summoned him to the senate; but whether he wished to show his indifference to the prescribed rules from the very beginning, or whether the oddity of his character always urged him to recklessness, he accepted the mandate of deputy of the suburb of Praga. Constantine consulted his august brother, who encouraged him in this; the emperor with his usual cleverness foresaw that the duke's menacing figure would be useful to nonplus the orators and check their dangerous transports of patriotism.

It was a novel and curious sight to behold the heir presumptive of the empire, the chief author of all the abuses of power, setting up for a defender of the people, and *in appearance* becoming the guardian of constitutional liberties.

During the fifteen years that this game of prince lasted, Constantine rarely went to the chamber. He spoke only once—in French—on the subject of provender. He presented but a single petition in favour of the residents of Praga, and it was the only one which met with the emperor's entire approval.

Otherwise he confined himself to the minutest inspection of the sentinels posted in the corridors and a strict supervision of the police while the sessions were in progress. In a word, he did the corporal more than the deputy.

Whether from kindness to the grand duke, or from family pride, Alexander never missed a parade; afterwards he returned to graver concerns. At about two he went out a second time, and visited the ladies he marked for distinction.

One day he came to see me, and I profited by the favourable occasion to ask the emperor his consent to a plan there was of erecting an equestrian statue of Prince Poniatowski in one of the squares of the town. As an heiress and near relation to the hero I had the right to venture this request. Alexander vouchsafed to grant me the permission I solicited, and spoke in terms of emotion of the noble qualities and heroic death of him whom it was intended to render such well deserved homage.

The next day I received an official letter from the emperor confirming his promise. He authorised a public subscription, which the army headed by contributing three days' pay. This imperial document has been stored with the archives at Willanow, where it is religiously taken care of.

After remodelling the army the grand duke undertook to apply his system of passive obedience to all branches of the government.

In every point resembling the Emperor Paul, his father, Constantine added to the savageness of a *moujik* the courtesy of a man of the world; he prided himself on his chivalrous politeness towards women. And it was thus that an unexpected change came about in the grand duke's private life.

The concern with which the public always watch the most insignificant actions of those who, through their position,

cannot escape their inquisitive eye, soon brought to notice the grand duke's assidious visits to the house of Madame Broniec. She had settled in Warsaw for the purpose of superintending the education of the three daughters she had had in her first marriage with M. Grudzinski.

Joan, the oldest of the three sisters, being the plainest, was at first not much sought after: well built, though small, she had blond locks and pale-blue eyes bordered with lashes ever fairer than her hair; her face had the washed out look of a pastel, and the same gentleness. She was unspeakably graceful, above all when she danced; you would have said she was a nymph,

Grazing the ground, yet touching it not.

The wits said she had glided into the grand duke's heart while dancing a gavotte.

Madame Fridrichs, moving among people who repeated everything that happened in a social set which had justly repelled her, became jealous and quarrelsome. Scenes occurred, and Constantine then dissembled his new infatuation, which became more serious day by day.

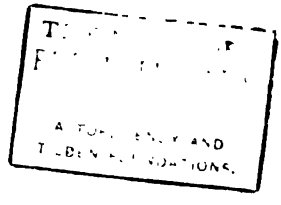
The mother, flattered by the duke's attentions, too stupid to feel their impropriety and to gauge their peril, abetted the interviews.

Meanwhile adulators, and such as were intriguing for places or pensions, flocked about Joan, who remained simple, modest, and reserved, accepting love only, and disdaining all the rest—she was never seen with a jewel nor an ornament more than her sisters.

This situation endured for two years. All of a sudden the rumour was spread, that a wedding had taken place, very quietly, but embodying the whole of the religious and civil ceremonial ordained by the Napoleonic code, still in force. Joan Grudzinska had insisted on the nuptial bene-

GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE OF RUSSIA.

From an engraving by Lignon after a drawing by Vigneron.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diction being given according to the Catholic rite. The only witnesses, excepting the bride's parents and sisters, were M. de Novosiltzoff, in his function of imperial commissioner, and Madame Broniec's physician, Doctor Czekierski.

The very next day the grand duke hastened to his former mistress, whom he had married to a young officer named Weiss. Constantine took Madame Weiss to his wife, and said, in presenting her, that he desired them to be on *good terms*. The duchess stiffened, the grand duke got angry, a misunderstanding arose which only grew worse; the public took sides with the legitimate spouse who had been so cruelly deceived in her most rightful hopes. Up till then she had inspired no more than a mild interest, but her sad position evoked profound commiseration. She went into a decline; her deadly pallor, the disorder of her blond locks, once her loveliest adornment, made her look like Ophelia.

She hid her sorrows carefully, but her face betrayed her secret pain; her eyes were haggard, and she seemed neither to see nor to hear anything that was going on about her. Thus we saw her participate in the festivities, given in honour of her marriage, without taking the least interest in them. Like a machine, submissive to her master's will, she followed the grand duke without so much as looking at him; she sat down, and kept silent and motionless till the moment when a sharp order from her husband compelled her to give a lifeless hand to the partner bowing before her. She slowly rose from her arm-chair, mechanically kept time to the rhythm of a polonaise without proffering a word, and suffered herself to be taken back to the seat assigned her without an apparent notion of ever having left it. The grand duke pretended to notice nothing, but he was in a dark humour, and could not subdue his displeasure. So that this marriage, to which Constantine had sacrificed his right to the throne, and which had given room to a long

series of disputes, seemed to have as its sole result the unhappiness of the wedded couple.

During these proceedings the emperor arrived at Warsaw, to take part in the opening of the second diet. He quickly perceived what slight harmony reigned in the new household, without however immediately guessing the reason.

The grand duke and duchess remained inscrutable; as for Madame Weiss, practised in the arts of her old trade, she understood perfectly how to cover up the relations she had continued with the duke. A fortuitous circumstance cleared up the whole mystery.

Alexander, wanting to please his sister-in-law, and observing that she had no piano, sent her the handsomest obtainable.

At one of the morning visits which the grand duke encouraged, Madame Weiss, having pushed into the duchess' boudoir, not without surprise became aware of the beautiful instrument. Supposing that this present could have come from no one but the duke, she evinced jealousy, and, wishing to give a further proof of her power to the wife she was continually insulting, ventured so far in arrogance as to demand the gift of this piano.

The duchess made a dignified defense; the scene grew lively, but after stronger resistance than Constantine was accustomed to, she was obliged to give way, and the following day the splendid instrument went to adorn Madame Weiss' saloon.

Chance, which often rejoices in disclosing the best hidden facts, smoothed out everything. Alexander went to dine at the Belvedere almost daily, at his brother's. Annoyed at the everlasting triangle after dinner, he one day proposed to his sister-in-law to step into her boudoir, there to breathe the perfume of flowers while listening to some music.

Which of the two spouses was the most embarrassed? However that may be the grand duke tried to give the matter a jesting turn; his wife, on the other hand, burst into tears, and wrapt herself in deepest silence.

From this moment Alexander's suspicions developed to certainty. He had only consented with reluctance to his brother's divorce and second marriage, but owing to his wish to keep Constantine from the throne he had yielded. He hoped to make the grand duke happier in this way.

The emperor, no longer in doubt as to the cause of the misunderstanding prevailing at the Belvedere, at once issued an order for Madame Weiss' departure.

The most perfect concord was finally established between the pair, a change of scenery, you would have said. The duchess revived. The sufferings that had so visibly altered her features left no further traces upon her face; Constantine's attachment seemed to increase day by day.

Alexander, to whom she owed this sudden difference of her position, did not stop his kindness there. Being unable, out of consideration for his mother, to give his sister-in-law the title of grand duchess, which belongs exclusively to princesses of the blood, he granted her the investiture of the Duchy of Lowicz, of which she assumed the name.

EPILOGUE

HERE my notes end. If henceforth I write any more it will be without sequence, and purely to state the noteworthy occurrences engraved upon my memory. The incessantly growing misfortunes of my country and my own sorrows have taken from me not only the desire, but also the capacity to write my memoirs. It is repellent to me to accuse others, and try to justify myself. Moreover the "Confessions" of Rousseau, which I read long after beginning to write, have given me a lesson.

Despite his undoubted talent and his wonderful prose he has contrived to gossip; in his excessive vanity he has presumed to believe that there are people privileged to be effusive in their confidences towards posterity, which, however, is rarely patient with anyone trying to interest it in personalities.

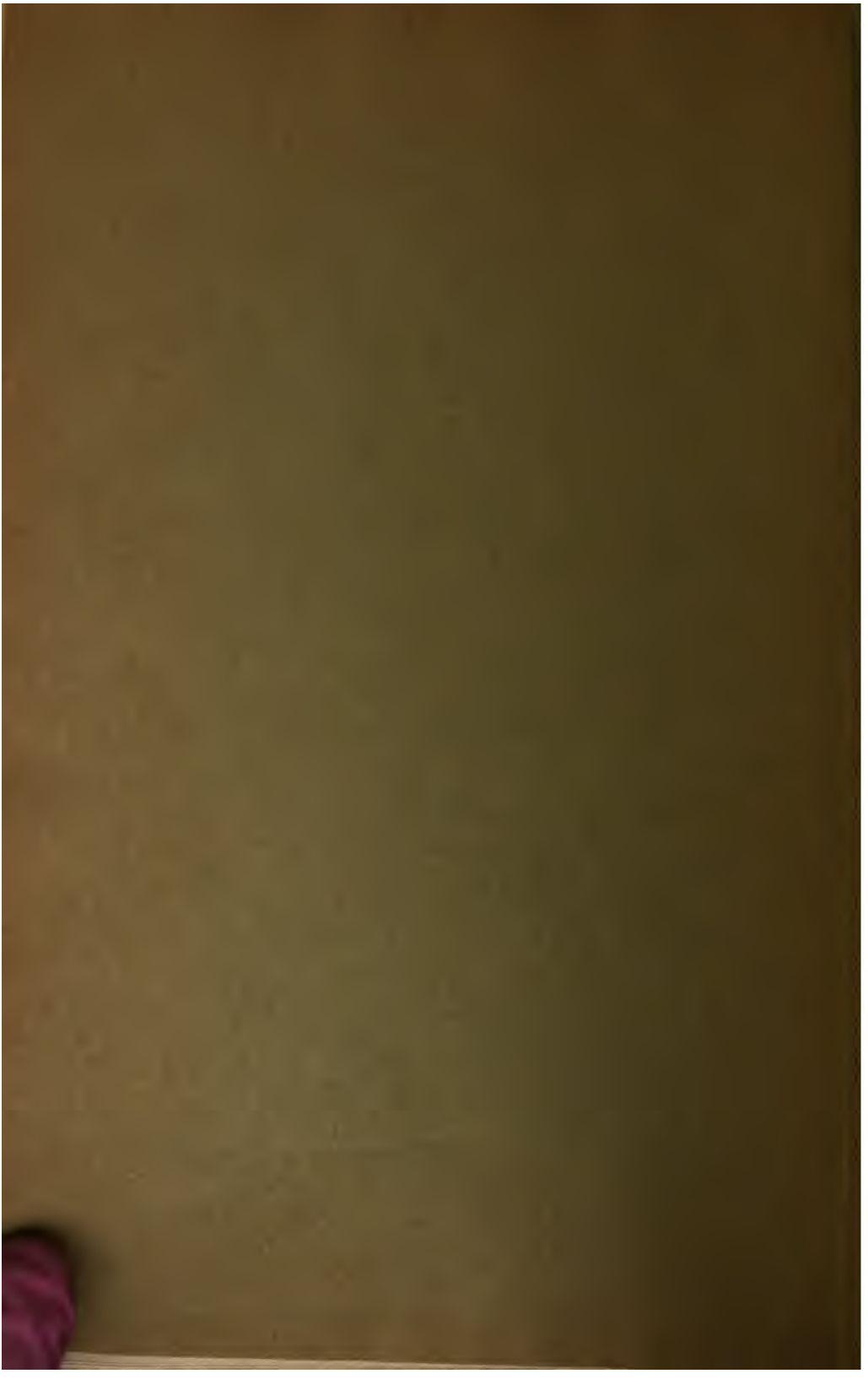
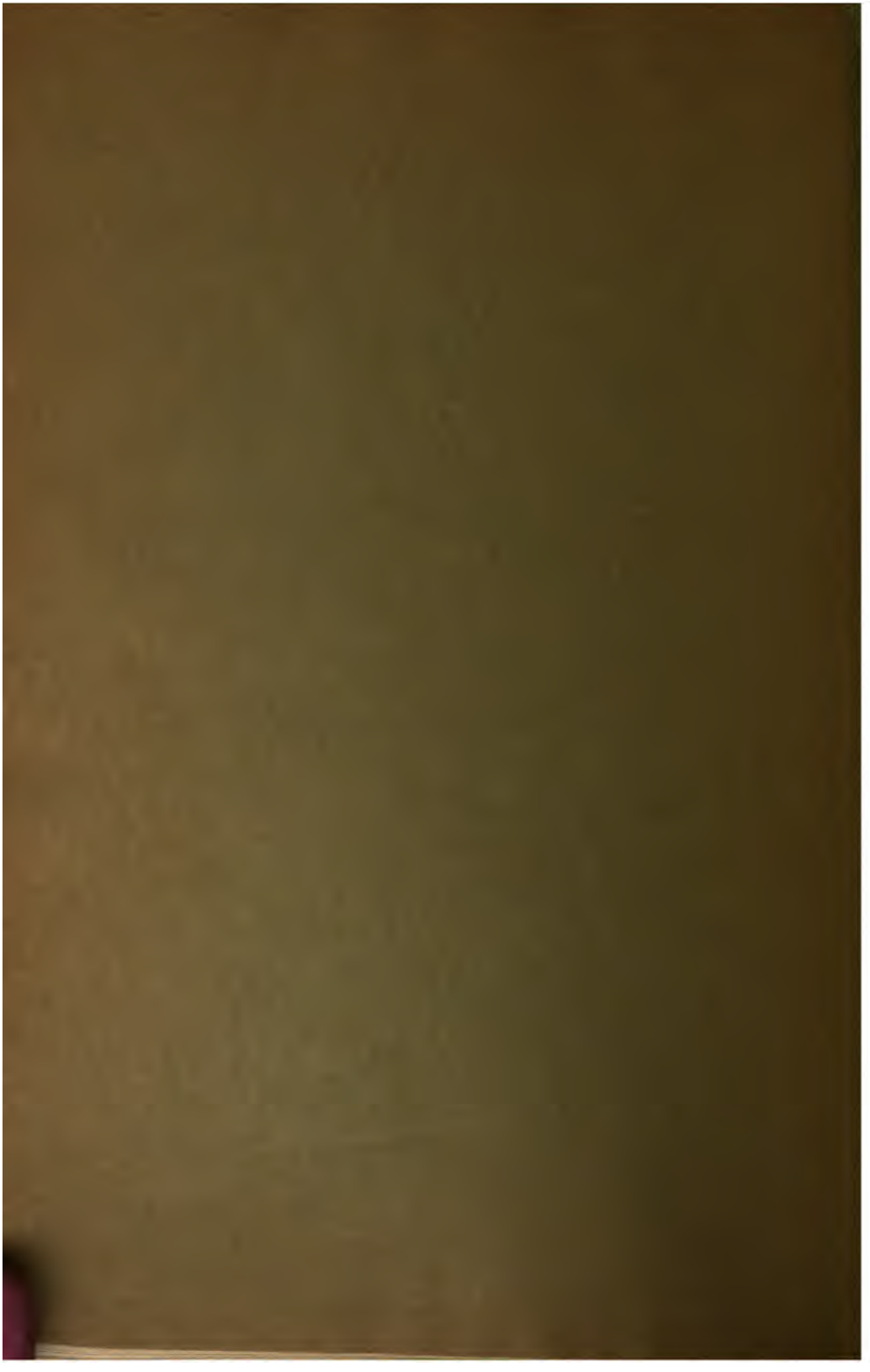
What a queer and painful sensation it is that one experiences when, after a long life, one casts an attentive look behind. How many events which have seemed remarkable condemned to oblivion! How many miscarried ambitions, betrayed hopes, faded regrets, chilled enthusiasms! How many so-called *deathless* passions destroyed before their time! What importance attached to petty concerns and to silly vanities which have not left a trace! What a vast number of individuals disappeared, some cut off in their prime, others after absolving a long and toilsome career! How many acts, how many names seeming to de-

serve immortality, hurled back into the gulf that swallows everything, the while persons of smaller merit survive because they happen to be thrown into contact with great events!

And we have witnessed such dramas; we have all rushed together to the same abyss: bursts of joy, cries of distress—all intermingled!

Arrived near the goal, are we armed against misfortune and resigned to the decrees of fate? Alas! Man ceases only to suffer and to hope when he ceases to live. Age modifies and changes the nature of our impressions, but nevertheless does not blot them out.

THE END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